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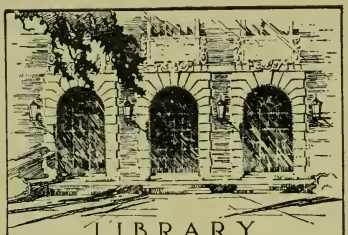

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By J. S. Fletcher,

Author of "The Winding Way," "Andrewlina," "Mr. Spivey's Clerk," etc.

In Three Volumes.

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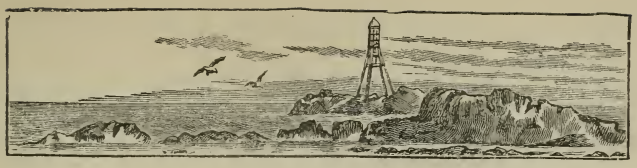


WHEN CHARLES THE FIRST WAS KING.

CHAPTER I.

OF THE LAND I LIVE IN.

IT may be thought by some, who from prejudice or ignorance are not in a position to judge properly of the matter, that there is nothing in this part of England which is worth writing of or describing, so strange are the views held by outsiders of us Yorkshiremen, so peculiar the ideas which many people have respecting our land, people, and manners. There is an impression beyond our borders that we are never so happy as

when engaged in a horse-dealing transaction, and it is quite true that we are fond of trade in that direction, and bad to overreach when it comes to a question of hard bargaining. Nevertheless, it is not true that we think of nothing else but horse-dealing, any more than that our county—or, at least, some parts of it—is not to be compared for natural beauties with other shires which have achieved more fame in that way. I have heard travelled men discourse of the fine scenery and beautiful landscapes of Cumberland and Westmoreland, and of the grandeur of Devon and Cornwall, not to speak of Derbyshire and some parts of Wales, comparing divers districts of these to the country in Switzerland and Italy, which is, I understand, as fair as anything this earth can show; but, in spite of that, it has always seemed to me that our own three Ridings can exhibit as many pleasing prospects as man need wish for; so that a

Yorkshireman casting his eyes upon them must needs thank God that he has been placed to live his life amongst such delectable spots. For we have hill and valley, and broad tracts of luscious meadow-land where you may feed a thousand head of cattle and never hurt the luxuriance of the grass, and our rivers are comparable for quiet beauty with Trent or Severn, and our rocky defiles are oftentimes as wild as anything that you will meet in Scotland or Cumberland. Then, again, our seaboard is such as few countries can show the like of, consisting as it does of rough promontory and rocky headland, joined with long stretches of brown sand, across which the North Sea's waves come tumbling cold and icy from Norroway. Nay, when I begin to think in good earnest of the matter, and to remember what I have seen in other days —for I have travelled somewhat myself—I am certain that for diversity of scenery you

may roam the wide world over and never find a country so fair, so rich in Nature's gifts, so pleasing to the eye as my native Yorkshire.

And of all parts of this broad-acred land there is none which I so much love or admire as that in which the greater portion of my life hath been spent, though I indeed have seen the whole of the three Ridings, from Cronkley Fell to Featherbed Moss, and from Flamborough Head to Bowland Forest. There is a fine beauty about the dales of the North Riding, and I have seen sights upon the lonely wolds of Cleveland and Ryedale which did inspire me with feelings of awe and great wonder. And I have heard artists who understood these matters say that amongst those dales and hills there are scenes which not all the world can show the equal of. Howbeit I am no artist, though loving a good picture, but only a simple yeoman born and bred on the

land, and never so happy as when breathing in the fresh air of a spring morning as it steals to your nostrils over the breadth of a new-ploughed field; and so, when it comes to a question of comparison between these districts, I give the palm to the broad meadow-lands and deep woods and gentle undulations of that corner of the West Riding where first I saw the light, where I have passed the greater part of my life to this present time, where, please God, I shall die and lie at peace.

If you will take your chart of Yorkshire and draw with your pen a straight line from Doncaster to Wakefield, from Wakefield to Wetherby, from Wetherby to York, from York to Goole, and from Goole to Doncaster again, you will have enclosed the tract of land of which I have spoken. I question if you can find throughout the length and breadth of England a similar piece of country more rich in historical associations, more

odorous of national life, more beautiful in its own quiet way. Here we have no great mountains, no rushing rivers, no awesome valleys, but the land rolls along in richness of wood and stream, thorpe and hamlet, the grey spires and towers of village churches rising heavenward here and there, the red roofs of farmsteads, the tall gables of manors and halls peeping from the great groves of elm and beech and chestnut which stud the land everywhere in prodigal luxuriance. Right through this land runs the Great North Road like a silver streak, straight and direct, so that as I stand at my door o' nights I can hear the carriers' waggons rumbling north and south, and the quick gallop of horses hurried on by post-boys fearful of highwayman and footpad, of whom in this year of grace, 1686, there are still many left amongst us. Branching from this noble highway go roads right and left, making communication between our villages

and market-towns easy, and being in a general way of speaking well kept. Right merry market-towns, too, are they of which I speak, and not to be put down by any of their fellows in England. For there is merrie Wakefield, with its bridge and chapel, where battles have been fought, and a king's son foully slain, and where in old times bows were made of right good Yorkshire ash or willow; and there is Pontefract, with its great castle, now falling into ruins, and its mighty Church of All Saints, and half a score of ancient religious houses; and there is Selby, with its glorious Abbey, whose towers and pinnacles you may see for many a square mile round about; and there is Wetherby, and Snaith, and Sherburn, and Thorne, each a fair market-town; and there is Goole, whence along the Ouse and Humber go ships even to the ports of Holland; and at the southern point there is Doncaster, breathing the air and spirit

of English freedom; and at the northern there is York, the proud and beautiful city, whose great Minster looks forth across the embattled walls upon the broad lands beyond, like a fair mother watching her children. And between these market-towns, fenced in by wood and stream and meadow, and embowered in leafy hedgerows, stands many a smiling village and hamlet, with its old church and great manor or castle standing in the midst of broad parks and pleasaunces. Here and there, too, you may come across some homestead standing alone in its meadows and closes, and yet never so far from a village that its occupants are entirely neighbourless. A fair land and a rich it is, and dear to me, as I have already said, because it bore and nursed me, and has smiled upon me, year in, year out, when human eyes did not smile, comforting me by its very beauty when life seemed dark and inexplicable.

It was within four miles of the ancient and historic market-town of Pontefract, where kings have been imprisoned and done to death, that I, William Dale, yeoman, was born in the year of grace 1621. The house wherein I first drew breath is that in which I now live; I trust in God it may shelter me to the end, and my children and grandchildren after me, for a right good house of stone it is, and was new tiled the year I came to man's estate, by Geoffrey Scholes, the mason, of Campsall, who did good and honest work in whatsoever he undertook. As for situation, it lieth somewhat lonely, but at a good altitude, and the air round about it is exceedingly clear and pleasant to breathe. It stands on the left-hand side of the highway as you go from Doncaster to Ferrybridge, and is distant exactly one and a half mile from the cross roads at Darrington and about three-quarters of a mile from Wentbridge. There is no house

stands near it—save one or two cottages that I builded for convenience sake, it being somewhat of a long way for the men to walk from the neighbouring villages, and the road nothing like safe o' dark nights—nevertheless, we have never felt afraid of harm, albeit we were visited more than once in the troublous times by robbers, who thought to take advantage of our lonely position. However, they were but ill-requited for their pains, two of the rascals carrying away nothing better than a charge of lead in their persons, and the third being shot stone dead by my cowherd, Jacob Trusty, as he was striving to make forcible entry into the pantry window. Yet lonely indeed is the situation of Dale's Field, and some more used to company might fear the long winter evenings which we spend here. No feeling of this sort ever came over myself, who knew that all around me lay my own good land, nigh four hundred acres of it, grass

and arable, of which my fathers had reaped the harvest for many a generation. Dales of Dale's Field there have always been since William the Conqueror came over; God knows whether there always will be, for I have seen ancient families dwindle away and vanish root and branch, so that even my own good old stock may possibly in time die out, and our homestead vanish from the face of the earth, and our acres, for which we have more than once stood much hard contest, even to blood-shedding, be swallowed up in the estates around them.*

I have said that Dale's Field stands at a good altitude, which is indeed a grateful truth. For standing at my door of a clear

* William Dale's fears on this ground were ultimately realized. There is now no trace of house or farmstead on the spot where he and his forefathers lived, and their acres are swallowed up in the neighbouring estates. Nevertheless, so strongly do old associations cling to the soil which reared them, that the meadows and closes there are called Dale's Fields to this day.

evening, and looking east and north-east, I can behold the two great hills rising up near Selby, the one called Hambleton Haugh, the other Brayton Barugh, and beyond them the long nave and high tower of Selby Abbey itself. Between me and them stretches a wide country of wood and meadow, which I am never tired of gazing upon in the summer evenings when I sit in my window with pipe and glass. For it seems to smile and smile and smile, and the green of the woods blends with the brown of the soil, and the clear blue overhead looks down on both with a smile of benediction. Somewhat of a flat land it is, that country due east, but none the less fair, seeing that it holdeth many a fair village, whose spires shoot upwards out of the green and stand clearly defined against the sky. To the northward, too, we can see a fair distance, where the high ground rises beyond Ferrybridge and Brotherton, over whose slopes the road climbs on its way to York.

A prospect of this sort is always most grateful to us who are born on the soil, and more to be preferred, because of its peaceful character and gentle undulations, than the bolder scenery which you will find in our northern dales. Nevertheless, if I am minded to look upon more diversified prospects, I am not far removed from such, for across my home meadows lies the Vale of Went, than which I never saw aught more picturesque in all our land. A beautiful valley and a charming it is, as you would say did you but enter it at Church Smeaton, or even further east, and follow it to the hamlet of Wentbridge, where it widens and spreads itself out in the broad meadow-lands that stretch at the foot of the long rise of ground called Went Hill. Along this valley is much diversity of scenery, for sometimes the sides slope gently towards each other, and sometimes they are dark and rocky and frown with beetling masses of grey crag,

and here and there are wild and barren, and in other places they are covered with luxuriant woods and groves of fir and pine. Nought fairer than Went Vale have I ever seen, especially as it presents itself in the early days of June, when all the trees are in leaf and the birds sing, sing, sing from morning till night, and the little stream of Went runs babbling along to join the Don some twenty miles away. Many a twist and turn does Went make as it flows through the valley. Now it is straight and placid, as between the mill-house and the bridge, and anon it winds in and out in capricious fashion, so that there is one spot where I have often stood and hurled a stone that crossed the stream five times in the one throw. Wealth, too, it hath of birds'-nests, and many a time have I tumbled down its rough and gnarly crags or from the yielding branches of its trees when hunting for the haunts of magpie and jackdaw, thrush and blackbird.

If you will look at your chart again you will find that my farmstead of Dale's Field is removed but little space from the head of Went Hill. How many times have I stood there in the early morning, when the valley beneath was full of mist, the long banks of which dispersed as the sun rose and shone upon the land! A fair prospect it is from Went Hill top, for in the wide valley beneath lie villages and hamlets and manors that relieve the eye from the long stretches of brown and green. Across the vale rises Upton Beacon, where they lighted the great bonfire when the Spanish Armada came to attack us. Beneath it lies the hamlet of Thorpe, and a mile away the square tower of Badsworth Church rises from the thick woods that shut that village in. Further away, in the direction of Wakefield, lie Nostell and Wragby and Hemsworth, and many another fair village, and nearer at hand, to the northward, stand Ackworth and

East Hardwick. Right at the head of the valley, and just peeping round the corner of the hill, is the village of Carleton, where for a brief season slept Oliver Cromwell and General Fairfax during the time of the siege of Pontefract Castle. And beyond Carleton, situate on high ground that shuts in the head of the valley like an amphitheatre, is Pontefract itself, its Church of St. Giles, in the market-place, standing out bold and distinct against the sky.

Now, to stand upon the summit of Went Hill and behold the prospect from thence is always a pleasant matter, for there is the land to look upon, and the villages, and the meadows are full of grazing cattle, and the sheep are feeding busily adown the hillside, and there is a manner of thanks-giving in the air which did always affect my heart mightily, though why it should do so I know not, having never in my life been given to rhyming or reading of rhymes, save

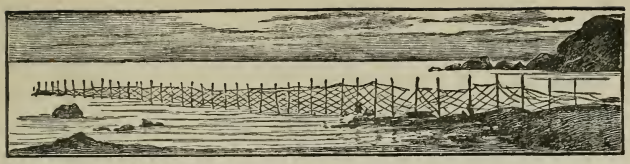
only Mr. William Shakspere's folio of plays which my father did buy in York when I was but a lad. But of a Sunday evening when, the light lasting till a late hour, they did use to sing Evensong in the parish churches at six instead of three, as in winter and autumn, I have often stood there with bowed and bared head listening reverently to the bells which sounded from all sides of me. Far across the valley were the bells of Pontefract and Ackworth and Badsworth, ringing out their peal with regular swing, and the bells of Darrington sounded over the hilltop, and those of Womersley sent their sound across the level land, and sometimes in the deep silence that followed when these were still, I caught the last faint tinkle of the bells of Smeaton making music across the woods and meadows. A beautiful and a holy sound it was, and raised in me a solemn feeling which not all the exhortations of Master Drumbleforth, our

parson, could ever produce, though he indeed at one time did talk much and long to me of my soul's health, when it seemed as if my condition needed it.

It is amidst these scenes that my life hath been spent, and it is from them that what I have to tell must gain interest, if interest there can be in a plain chronicle of the doings of a simple farmer, whose lot it has been to live in somewhat troublous times and be dragged into the concerns thereof sorely against his will. It would best have suited me, as it suited my fathers before me, to have lived my life on the land undisturbed, to have had no greater matters to think of than the ploughing of the twelve-acre or the sowing of early wheat, to have taken no further journey than to York or Doncaster, and to have been free from affairs of State and difficulties of lawyers' making. Howbeit, Providence, which hath many things to provide for, ordained that

my life for awhile was to be neither quiet nor ordinary, and did hustle and bustle me hither and thither like one of my own haycocks in a gale of wind. For in my earlier days I saw what no honest Englishman cares to see, namely, the country divided against itself, Englishman fighting with Englishman, Parliament against the Monarchy, so that oftentimes father fought against son, and brother with brother, and the land was alive with Roundheads and Cavaliers, and peaceable citizens knew not what to make of things, and battles were fought, and the throne pulled down, and they laid siege to Pontefract Castle and dismantled it, and cut off the king's head before his own palace of Whitehall, at which sad business I, William Dale, was present, and have to this day a memento of, to wit, a kerchief steeped in His Majesty's blood. And in these declining years of my life—though I am, thank God, as hale and hearty

a man as you will find in the three Ridings —I am minded, chiefly through the persuasions of my daughter Dorothy, who is fond of her book, to write down with such small skill as I have or she can lend me, somewhat concerning my adventures in those evil days that came upon us in the middle of this present century.



CHAPTER II.

OF MY FAMILY, FRIENDS, NEIGHBOURS AND ENEMIES.

IT would appear most fitting to the proper usages that, before going further, I should tell you something about our family and the mode of life we kept in my younger days, and also some particulars of our neighbours and friends, and likewise of our enemies, of whom you will hear no little before this history closes. And to begin with my own family first—we Dales are of an ancient race, and have lived at Dale's Field certainly since the time of the Conquest, and, I doubt not, even before that.

That we are proud of our ancient birth and of the fact that age after age we have tilled our own land, goes without saying. It is, I think, an innocent pride, and not of the nature of that vainglory which we are commanded as good Christians to eschew.

There were four of us in family at Dale's Field: my father, John Dale; my mother, Susannah Dale; my sister Lucy, and myself. To speak of my father first. He was a great man, a man of tall stature and broad shoulders, and his face was of the colour of a rising sun, red and healthy, and tanned with exposure to wind and rain and summer heat. A right hearty man he was, and was never known to refuse his meals. A healthy appetite, indeed, he always had, as most men have who, like him, are out of their beds and about their business ere ever Sol hath risen from the eastern horizon. Up and about was he at five in summer and six in winter, and would roundly rate any

man that came to stall or stable a minute later than those hours. For he himself was abed by nine o' the clock, and could not understand why a man wanted more than eight hours' sleep. Once up, he would bustle about from stable to mistal, from barn to rickyard, urging on his men with cheery voice or honest scolding—for he was a scrupulously fair master, and praised or blamed as need arose—and seeing the day's labour fairly commenced, until half-past seven, when breakfast was served in our great kitchen, and master and men sat down together. A custom, indeed, it hath always been in our family, and one which I have religiously preserved, for all under the roof to eat together, according to their various station of life. Thus my father and mother sat at a cross-table with Lucy and myself, and the men were placed in order at long tables set out on either side of the great kitchen. Nor did the meat served at our

table differ from that served at our servants', for it was my father's opinion that master and man, who shared the toils of the land, should also share the produce thereof, wherefore no man of ours was ever stinted of beef or beer or bread.

My father's mode of life was as simple and regular as well could be. After breakfast—whereat he always drank no more than a quart of small ale, holding that no one should drink much liquor before noon—he went forth to ride round his fields, mounted on a little white mare named Dumpling, which was an animal of exceeding strength though low stature. How many miles he had ridden upon Dumpling, I know not; yet Jack Drumbleforth, our parson's son, did once compute it at some thousands. Nor was Jack far out in his reckoning, for my father and Dumpling were used to turn out of the yard as the kitchen clock struck nine, and did not appear again until noon,

the intervening hours being passed in riding up one field and down another, or in cantering along the road to Darrington to give an order to blacksmith or carpenter. After dinner in the great kitchen, my father would smoke a pipe in my mother's parlour, and drink a glass of strong waters, and maybe fall asleep for the space of half an hour, after which he would arise and shake himself, and go forth and mount Dumpling once more and ride out amongst his men. And at supper-time he would talk to my mother of the day's doings and the weather, and would then smoke more tobacco—which habit was then becoming popular—and drink ale out of his own silver flagon, and at nine o'clock would lock up his house and go to bed, where he slept, as he himself hath often said, without dream or even turning over, until the cocks began to crow in the yard outside.

Upon Saturdays it was my father's custom,

having eaten a larger breakfast than usual, to attire himself in his second-best suit of clothes, and make ready to ride into Pontefract market. There were times when my mother went with him, and then the light cart was brought out of the shed, and Dobbin, the brown horse, harnessed in the shafts, for Dumpling would never abide other gear than a saddle. When my father went alone, however, Dumpling was extra well groomed, and wore the new bridle and stirrups, and the two departed about ten o'clock, my father carrying little bags of wheat or barley samples in his pockets, to show to them that dealt in such matters. Other produce which went to market, or stock like cattle or sheep, was taken thither by Jacob Trusty or Timothy Grass earlier in the morning. All day long would my father remain at market, dining at the farmers' ordinary, and when business was done remaining an hour longer to drink with

his friends and acquaintance. Nevertheless, he always strove to arrive at his home ere night fell, for the road was here and there of a lonely nature, and there were dangerous characters abroad.

Once, indeed, coming home from Pontefract market, my father did light upon an adventure which had been like to put an end to him for ever. It chanced that Jacob Trusty, our cowherd, had that day driven four and twenty young beasts to market, and there my father speedily sold them to Richard Myles, the butcher, who paid him for the same openly in the street. And as they were counting the money my father took notice of two evil-looking men, habited like north country cattle-drovers, who hung about in the crowd and cast longing glances at Dick Myles's bag of money. Howbeit, he lost sight of them and thought no more upon the matter. But riding homewards, between the cross roads at Darrington and

Dale's Field, and being come to the great plantation which occurs 'twixt the mile-stones, two men mounted did suddenly ride out of the trees, and commanded him to halt and deliver. Whereupon, Dumpling, responding, shot out like an arrow and flew homewards, and my father, bending low over her shoulders, heard two bullets whistle above his head. And the men following hard, it became a question whether or not they would come up to him before Dale's Field was reached. More than one shot did they fire, but Dumpling galloped fast, and outstripped the taller brutes ridden by the highwaymen. But when the yard gate was reached the pursuers were almost upon them, and if it had not been that my mother heard the unwonted clatter of Dumpling's feet, my father had been slain at his own door. Howbeit, she, hearing the commotion, opened the house-door, and my father leaping off, entered, bringing Dumpling with

him, and barred the door behind them. And while Dumpling and my mother, the one trembling and all of a lather, and the other frightened and fearful, stood in the great kitchen, my father took down his fowling-piece and ran upstairs, and there from a little window did let fly at the men to such purpose that one of them screamed and reeled, and both rode off as hard as their brutes could carry them. And the next morning there was blood on the paving of the yard, so that we judged that the villains had received more than they ever wished to have.

As for my mother, Susannah Dale, she was the daughter of Master Richard Challoner, the corn miller of Ackworth, who left her a tidy portion at his death. She was a tall, fine woman, well suited to marry such a man as my father, of whom indeed she cherished a great affection, as he did of her, both thinking there was no such

husband or wife in all the land. A capital housewife she was, and had a manner of preserving plums which was famous for twenty miles around, so that it became usual to say of a fresh-looking old man or woman that he or she was as well-conserved as Mistress Dale's damsons. For the other matters which appertain to good housewifery she had a natural turn, and found great occasion of delight in curing hams and flitches, and rearing poultry of various sorts, in making up butter into curious devices, and in seeing that the apples, pears, plums, apricots, and gooseberries were properly attended to. There was never a weed in the kitchen garden, and she would never have slept at night if she had not previously seen with her own eyes that the hen-roost and pigeon-cote were secured from the foxes, who are always prowling round to see what they can pick up. Nor was there ever a weakly calf that she did not nurture with

new milk, feeding it with spoon or quill until it seemed likely to do for itself. As for sewing, and mending, and making of new garments, she was indefatigable at it, and had always her knitting in her hand as she sat by the wood fire in her parlour, which was an exceeding pleasant apartment where all the conserves were kept, and the white table linen and napery, of which she had much store, and the six silver forks given to her by her father at her marriage, with other matters, over which she loved to keep a vigilant watch. Also in that chamber there was a deep window-seat, filled with plants in scarlet-coloured pots, which she watered and tended every morning. And over against my mother's chair, in which no one else ever sat, there was fixed an oaken shelf, made by our carpenter, which held certain books, her own property, out of which she read much. There was the Bishop's Bible, and King James's Bible,

which they had just begun to sell, and there was Mr. Francis Quarles's "Pentalogia, or the Quintessence of Meditation," and Raphael Holinshed's "Chronicle," and "Purchas, his Pilgrimage," and Pattenham's "Art of English Poesie," and the "Compleat Farrier," out of which my mother was wont to read a cure for horse or cow temporarily afflicted, and there was Mr. William Shakspere's Plays, and Master Latimer's "Sermons on the Ploughers," and various others, all of which she read, being a great scholar in her way. But my father read little, save a chapter in the Bible every Sunday night; nevertheless, he was a great admirer of my mother's learning, and did often say that there was no clerk in the archdiocese of York who knew more of book-craft than she did. And indeed she did often divert us in the long winter evenings by reading to us out of Mr. Shakspere's folio, which she accomplished in a manner

so remarkable that we were moved to tears or laughter as the case might be, over the woes or humours of Hamlet and Ophelia, Romeo and Juliet, Sir John Falstaff and Mrs. Page. At these times my father would get so interested that he would conceive the matter to be real, and if there came a fight or an argument would shout forth his council to the side he favoured.

Although our situation at Dale's Field was somewhat lonely and retired, we were not without company. For the village of Darrington, as I have already told you, lieth but a mile and three quarters along the highway, and to Darrington Church we were accustomed to proceed every Sunday morning, wet or fine, hot or cold, throughout the year, my father holding that attendance upon Divine Service was good preparation for the coming week. A pleasant walk indeed it was in summer, between the tall hedgerows and under the shadow of the ancient trees

that line the roadside, and we were accustomed to look forward to it. Upon reaching the village we were used to meet with a stream of villagers going churchwards, with some of whom, our acquaintances, we fell in, discoursing of various matters until we came to the churchyard, where the people always fell into groups to wait the arrival of the vicar. A pretty sight it was —the old, worn church in the background, the groups of boys round the ancient sundial over against the porch, the farmers in their best, chatting soberly about the harvest prospects, their wives discoursing domestic affairs, the young maidens, very gay as to their garments, smiling and whispering amongst themselves, and the young men eyeing the maidens. Then there were old men and old women, who came slowly up the paths and blessed everybody they spoke to, and somewhere about the porch hovered the parish

constable, with his appurtenances of office, striking terror into the hearts of all who were naughtily disposed. And high above these groups sounded the music of the bells, of which there are three. These, we always thought, did use to say, "Come to church, come to church, come to church," but Jacob Trusty, our cowherd, said that they inquired, "Who beats us, who beats us, who beats us?" However, they made fine jangling music, and could be heard right away at Dale's Field, ere ever we set out down the road.

At five minutes to eleven two of the bells ceased ringing, and the third rang all alone until the hour. Then did late-comers, hearing the solitary bell, hurry their movements, and then did the Reverend Nathaniel Drumbleforth, our parson, come through the vicarage garden and approach the churchyard. A fine figure, too, he made of a Sunday morning, being habited in

cassock, and gown, and bands, and wearing his best silver buckles and four-cornered cap, and the bow he would make to the assembled groups, as he passed between them, was as fine as anything you can see at court. To be sure, he was a college man, and had much learning, and had, it was even said, once written a learned work, so that it was only likely he should excel in courtliness. And when he had greeted us all and we him, he led the way into church and put his surplice on, and went into the reading-desk, and Thomas Cludde, the sexton, made ready to give due answer, and the bell ceased ringing above, and the service began with "Rend your hearts and not your garments."

As for myself, in my younger days I was chiefly occupied during the time of Divine Service in thinking about other matters. For there were matters which did more easily claim a lad's attention than

the reading and discoursing of Parson Drumbleforth, such as the performance of the village musicians, who sat in the chancel and played hymn tunes, and the flying about of the swallows and sparrows, who came in through the open windows and twittered in the beams overhead. Likewise, in summer and spring, there came to our ears from the meadows outside the humming of bees and countless insects, who were flitting from flower to flower, mingled with the lowing of cattle and occasional neighing of horses. These things necessarily distracted my attention—to wit, I used to wonder if there were eggs or fledglings in the swallow's nest which I could see under the arch of the chancel, or if the sparrows were still building in the tower, or if that were Farmer Denby's roan cow that mooed so loudly under the western window. To the musicians I gave great heed, for their performance was considered very fine. There

was amongst them a violin, first and second, and a double bass, a couple of flutes, and a serpent, and when they were minded to exert themselves they made a brave show, and the hymns went trippingly.

When Parson Drumbleforth ascended the pulpit and gave forth his text, our churchwardens were used to take up their rods of office and leave the church for a visit to the two ale-houses. This indeed is a time-honoured observance, and one that no churchwarden worthy the name will ever forego. For the churchwarden, bearing in mine that every able-bodied man should, in duty to God and the king, present himself at Divine Office, must, when sermon begins, assume his rod and go forth to see that no idler tarrieth drinking and carousing in the taverns. It hath been said by persons of a suspicious nature that the wardens are not above taking a mug of small ale themselves when on these visits, but that is neither here

nor there, for their vocation is one of much arduous duty, and small ale hurteth no man. However, when they have visited the inns and haled forth any that linger there, they return to the church, where the parson is just finishing his discourse, and do assist, if need be, in whatever matter is to be attended to.

Very often, upon a Sunday, one or other of our neighbours at Darrington would accompany us home to Dale's Field, and share our dinner, remaining afterwards to smoke a pipe of tobacco with my father. And about once a week came Parson Drumbleforth to sup with us, and discourse upon the crops and news from London, which were great occasions, and served to relieve the monotony in which we had otherwise lived. Then, too, there were always farmers, or drovers, or cattle-dealers upon the road, and these would come in for half an hour and refresh themselves, so that we

were not without news of the great world, which was also communicated to us by the passing coaches, post-chaises, and chariots continually hastening to or from London and York. Now and then my mother would take Lucy and myself, and pay a visit of ceremony to some farmer's wife at Darrington or Wentbridge, upon which occasions we were used to play with the children of the house, and explore their orchards, and gardens, and buildings, though we never saw any so good as our own at Dale's Field.

As for enemies, we had none save the Watsons of Castle Hill, who were yeomen like ourselves, and had been on the land and in deadly feud with the Dales for many a century. Never did a Dale speak to a Watson unless provoked thereto by anger or wrong done, and then the word was as oft as not accompanied by a blow. And the cause of dispute was this—between our land

and that of the Watsons lay a broad strip of moorland, over which each family claimed a right, to the exclusion of the other. When, as often happened for years, neither house strove to take possession of the debateable piece of ground, matters were quiet between them, but when one drove thereon a herd of cattle or flock of sheep, then arose a conflict and hot argument, and heads were broken. So it had continued to be for many a generation, and so it was when I came into the world, so that people made the matter a proverb, and spoke of far removed things as being as widely separated as a Dale and a Watson. But out of that ancient feud and the ill blood and evil passions it engendered much misery was to result, as I shall show ere this story be brought to an end.

CHAPTER III.

OF MY FIRST MEETING WITH ROSE LISLE.

UPON a certain fine afternoon in the early spring of 1631, dinner being well over, and my father smoking his pipe in the chimney corner, while my mother was busied elsewhere on some matter of domestic importance, I went out into the fold, and there came across Jacob Trusty, our cowherd, who was just then feeding twelve fat beasts intended for an approaching cattle-fair at Wakefield. And having nought to do I approached Jacob with a view of hearing him talk. Many an hour, indeed, had I spent with Jacob Trusty in and about the farmstead,

listening to his stories of bygone days, of which he carried a various collection in his mind, side by side with much legendary lore concerning ghosts, fairies, and hobgoblins. My mother, to be sure, said that Jacob was never so content as when talking to me, which perhaps was a natural thing, seeing that he had nursed me on his knee almost as soon as I was born, and had always manifested a great interest in my doings. Nevertheless, to most other people Jacob Trusty was as cross-grained and surly as man well can be, and was hardly ever known to give a civil answer to any that made inquiry of him. He was even accustomed to give advice to my father, and to comment upon what things were done on the farm; and this, my father said, must be excused in Jacob, because he had been, man and boy, at Dale's Field for a matter of fifty-three years, and had fed the cattle in our fold under three Dales. A tall, powerfully fashioned man was Jacob Trusty,

with a great stoop in his broad shoulders, and a somewhat large nose which stood out of his face between the roundest and reddest cheeks that ever man had. As for his attire, it was always the same: a long smock that reached below his knee, and a round cap which was secured to his head by a woollen scarf that came over his ears, and was tied beneath his chin. From underneath his smock peeped Jacob's grey stockings, terminating in large boots of undressed leather, the soles of which were of such prodigious thickness as to make me wonder. When Jacob's duties took him to market at Pontefract or Wakefield, he added no more to his accustomed garb than a scarlet neckcloth which he had once bought of a mercer in York. With this round his neck, and his thick ash cudgel in his hand, Jacob considered himself fit for the best company in the land.

Upon this particular afternoon, Jacob

Trusty, when I drew near, was engaged in throwing a cart-load of turnips into the shed wherein his twelve fat cattle were then chained. Seeing me approach, he left off his work, and leaned both hands on the head of his four-pronged fork, looking waggishly at me across the turnip-heap.

"Well, Master William," said Jacob Trusty.

"Well, Jacob," said I.

"Hast had a good dinner, William?" inquired Jacob.

"Very good, Jacob," I answered.

"That's well, William. For if there be one thing to thank the Lord heartily for, 'tis a good appetite. Beef, lad, and beer; sound, home-brewed beer, is what a Dale wants, for the Dales are always big, great-boned men, and need support. Thy grandfather now—ah, what a man was that!"

"What! bigger than father, Jacob?"

"Od, man, ay, by two inches all ways.

Natheless, thy father will do—only thou wilt be a bigger man than he is by an inch. At least, if thou dost thy duty with cup and trencher. Ah, as for good ale, well, there was never ale like ours at Dale's Field. I have been through the Riding, and should know."

Jacob wiped his mouth with his hand, and stuck one prong of his fork into a turnip that betrayed an intention to roll down the hill. On beholding Jacob's hand pass across his mouth, I knew what he wanted.

"Shall I fetch you a pot of ale, Jacob?" said I.

"Why," said Jacob, meditatively, "a quart had I at dinner-time, and yet I do feel drouthy."

Whereupon I went to the pantry, where my mother was counting out a sitting of eggs for the speckled hen to hatch, and begged a pot of ale for Jacob Trusty, the which I got with very little trouble, Jacob

being an old and valued servant, and deserving of little comforts now that he was getting into years. "Ah," said Jacob, leaning against the tail of his cart, and removing the pewter from his mouth. "That does me a power o' good, William. What a pity 'tis that the Lord in His mercy didn't make all the rivers run good ale! What beautiful drinking there would ha' been then."

"But you couldn't make ale without water, Jacob; and then, if the rivers ran ale, what would the cattle do?"

"Ah, what, indeed!" answered Jacob. "Poor ignorant creatures! Mind thee, William, lad, as thou goest through the world thou wilt see this difference 'twixt Christians and heathen men, namely, that the Christian man drinketh his ale like a man should, while your heathen cannot away with it! What did not Will Stripe, that went to the wars from Badsworth village, and did travel almost to the world's end,

come back and tell us in the alehouse there, that he had been in lands where there was no ale to be had? Wherefore, be thankful, lad, that thou art a Yorkshireman. As for me, I have lived on good ale, and true-fed beef, and wheaten bread, and am now sixty-and-eight years old, come Martinmas, and a strong man."

Whereupon he tossed off his pot, and, putting it down, turned to the turnips, and began to fling them into the shed with such energy that the air was dark with them, and the twelve fat oxen tugged at their chains in fear.

"An I were thee, Master William," suddenly said Jacob Trusty, looking up from his task, and leaning his double-chin meditatively upon the cross-bar of his fork—"an I were thee, I should go a bird's-nesting this fine afternoon."

"Bird's-nesting, Jacob! Why, there aren't any yet, are there? Isn't it too early?"

"Hist, lad! Dost know the old sheep-fold in Went Vale yonder? I saw a storm-cock's nest in the elm above it a week since. There will be eggs in that, I doubt not. Mind——"

But I was gone. I had not been a bird's-nesting that year, for it was but the second or third week in March, and with us the birds do not generally nest before April, saving the storm-cock, or missel-thrush, as some call it, which builds in March, so that when Jacob spoke of the matter I was fresh and eager, and crossed the fold and was over the wall and running across the home meadows ere he could tell me to mind not to break my neck, with which counsel all his information usually ended.

It was a beautiful day, one of those perfect days which come in spring, and make us thank God for very joy of life. As I ran across the meadows that lie between Dale's Field and the head of Went Vale, I noticed

that the grass wore a brighter green, that the hedgerows were beginning to bud, that the ash and elm were already starting into new life, and that everything was foretelling the new arrival of what Master Herrick the poet calls "the sweet o' the year," Yea, as I ran alongside a great hedge seeking some convenient gap or opening, I became aware of the odour of violets, which is, I think, the most beautiful scent that ever delighted a man's nostrils. And eager as I was to get forward to the old sheepfold, I could not but stop on smelling the violets, and gather a few. Only a country-bred lad, indeed, could find them so quickly as I did, for mark you, the violets are a modest and retiring people, and love to hide themselves from the common eye. So you must turn up the glossy broad leaves which cover their retreat, and push aside the brambles under whose protection they love to grow, and then you will find them, heavenly blue and fragrant,

nestling under the hedges like tender children that dread the rough world. And not only violets did I find that afternoon, but also early primroses, whose pale yellow faces met me as soon as I entered the wood. And at seeing them I laughed aloud for joy, for it is a saying with us that spring is fairly come when primroses flower. And, laughing and singing, I went through the woods that stretch along the right bank of Went, making a posy of violets and primroses, and thinking how pleased my mother would be when I took them to her, and how she would put them in a jar of fresh water, and place them in the window-sill of her own chamber. For we country folk, though some might not think it of us, are fond of the flowers and blossoms that are all about our homes, and do make as much of our first primrose or violet as a town-bred fine dame will of a rare jewel.

With the blue sky peeping at me through

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the trees, and the crying of new-born lambs (true and blessed sign that spring is come again) in my ears, I went along the woods. I passed above the mill at Wentbridge, where the stream was pouring through the wheel-house like a cataract, and turned by a steep path towards the old sheepfold, which was a rough place of four walls and a thatched roof, where we had kept sheep at such times as they were out at pasture in the valley just beneath. There was a clearing all round the sheepfold, and this was hedged in from the wood by a straggling belt of trees, amongst which the most prominent was a great elm that had once been struck by lightning, and had since only blossomed in a few of its boughs. And it was in the thick of these, where the fresh green shoots were just beginning to bud, that I espied the storm-cock's nest of which Jacob Trusty had told me.

Now, I had never yet been daunted in the

matter of climbing tree or tower, and as for fear, I knew not what it was, nevertheless I paused and meditated before climbing the elm that afternoon. For the storm-cock, wise beyond his station, had fixed his house where the boughs were not strong enough to bear me or any boy capable of climbing. Nevertheless, I was not to be easily worsted, and spying a bough underneath the nest from which it seemed probable that I should be able to reach over, I took off cap and coat and began to climb up the rough trunk of the elm. This part of the business was easy enough, for a quantity of ivy grew round that elm, and the twisted strands made good purchase. Likewise, it was easy enough, when, having done with the ivy, I clambered out along the bough towards the spot where the nest hung swaying in the twigs above. But being arrived there I came to a stand-still, for the nest was a good foot above the full stretch of my arm, and therefore out of

my reach. This disconcerted me for a time, but I had made up my mind to carry home an egg in triumph, and therefore cast about for fresh means. And nothing seeming better than to lay hold of an overhanging bough, and swing myself up to the level of the nest, I seized upon one that hung conveniently, and proceeded to climb it hand over hand, my body meanwhile swinging in mid-air, in what my mother, had she been there, would have considered a dangerous fashion. And dangerous indeed it proved to be, for I had no sooner got to the level of the nest and peeped over and seen four eggs lying therein, than my right hand slipped, and I went tumbling through branch and bough with a great noise, and came to earth with such a prodigious bump that my eyes flashed fire, and my senses went clean away from me.

It was perhaps due to the thickness of my skull and the strength of my neck and

shoulders that I was preserved from broken bones, for in falling I had turned clean over, and so pitched right upon my crown, just as a cat will always fall upon her feet. However, my head is a thick and somewhat wooden one, and after a time I sat up, and by dint of hard rubbing brought back my wits to their proper place, not without a feeling that they had else gone a wool-gathering, and a knowledge that my forehead and neck ached as though I had fallen from the church tower. Yet I minded the aches and pains not so much as that the storm-cock's nest still hung swaying in the branches high above me. For I had never, since being first put into breeches, liked to be beaten in anything, and I now reflected that the storm-cock had proved itself my master.

While I sat rubbing my head, and wondering what Jacob Trusty would say to my tumble, I heard a sound which made

me pause and listen. It was the voice of a girl singing in the wood close by, a pure, sweet, clear voice, though childish, and the words it sang were these :

"Spring is coming o'er the hill !
Primrose pale and daffodil,
Daisies white and rosy,
Now are springing from the soil.
Tread ye lightly, lest ye spoil
My Lady's posy.

"Bring me, from some mossy stone,
Violets that all alone
Burst to perfect flower.
These, with snowdrops pure and white,
Wet with morning's dew, shall light
My Lady's bower !"

Now as this song went on, the sounds came nearer and nearer, and at length I saw, coming up the path by which I had climbed towards the sheepfold, a girl who carried a little basket of primroses and violets in one hand, and swung her little hood in the other. She saw me not as she came along the path, for I lay there still as any mouse,

wondering who she might be. But when she came into the clearing and looked round her, she espied me, and stopped short as she was beginning another verse of her song. And so there we were, neither saying aught, but both staring wide-eyed at each other. And now if I were a poet or a spinner of fine words, such as they use in Courts and fashionable places, I might perhaps tell you with justice how my dear love, as she came to be in after years, looked upon that afternoon when I first set eyes upon her. For though she was then but a child of eight years old, she was already so bewitching that I could not but gaze at her with something like wonder in my lad's heart. She was like Little Red Riding Hood in the fairy tale, for her hood, swinging loosely from her tiny brown hand, was red, and the little cloak above her grey, homespun gown, was red, and she had dainty scarlet shoes upon her feet such as I had never seen.

As for her face, it was dark and gipsy-like, and her hair, black as night, tumbled loosely on each side, and fell across her shoulders; and her eyes, large and wondering as she looked at me, were darker than her hair. Yet can I give no true account of her with words, for it would need the brush of some great painter to represent her as she seemed to me then, and as I remember her to this day.

Now when we had looked at each other for some minutes I tried to rise to my feet. But the buzzing in my head was by no means gone, and I was no sooner up than down again. Wherewith my new acquaintance cast down her basket and ran to me, and looked at me with pitying eyes.

"Oh," cried she, "you are hurt, poor boy!"

"Nay," quoth I, "'tis nought. I have tumbled from higher trees than yon elm."

But she stayed not to hear me, but seized

upon my cap and ran away, and presently came back with water in it, with which she wet my forehead like any skilled nurse, all the time telling me to lie still lest in rising I grew sick and fainted away. Howbeit, I, like all lads, grew restive under female treatment, and presently rose and put on my jacket, and gave myself a mighty shake and felt right again, save for a slight ache in the back of my head. And this done, I stood looking at the little maiden, saying nothing, but wondering a good deal.

"And now," quoth she, "take hold of my hand, else you will fall again going down the path."

But I laughed and shook my head. "I am all right now," said I, and glanced up at the storm-cock's nest, half minded to try it again. But my head was still running somewhat, and I made a vow to come back next day, so that if I fell once more there should be none to witness my defeat.

"What is your name?" said the little maid, presently.

"William Dale; and my father's name is William Dale too, and we live at Dale's Field," said I. "What is yours?"

"Mine is Rose Lisle."

"Lisle? There are no Lisles hereabouts," said I. "Where do you come from?"

"From a long way off—near London. Father brought me on his horse to Wentbridge two days since, and in a day or two he will come and take me away again."

Now, I know not why, but when Rose Lisle said that she was going away, there was a feeling of regret came into my heart. For indeed, I had never seen aught like her before, and might never, for aught I knew, see aught like her again.

CHAPTER IV.

OF PHILIP LISLE AND HIS GOOD HORSE CÆSAR.

"I AM going to find primroses," said Rose, picking up her basket.

"I know where they grow," said I. "Come along, and I will show you the best places."

And so we went through the wood, gay as the spring air that breathed upon us, and talking childlike about ourselves and our fathers and of such matters as children best love to dwell on. And presently the shyness wore off and we ran along hand in hand amongst the trees, and I showed her where I had climbed the crags for the jack-

daw's nest, and took her to the bank of the Went at the place where you can throw a stone across five times in one cast, and from thence we wandered down stream to the mill, where the miller and his men peered at us through a mist of dusty whiteness, and the Went ran howling through the great wheel and fled away in thick circles of spume. And I told her about our farm of Dale's Field, and how many horses we had, and how many cattle and sheep, with many particulars concerning Dumpling the pony, and Jacob Trusty, and Timothy Grass, and other matters upon which I loved to talk. She, in return, told me that she lived in a town a long, long way off, as indeed it must have been, seeing that it was but an hour's ride from London itself. As for mother, or sister, or brother, she had none, nor ever remembered having, nor any other relation save her father, who was called Philip Lisle, and had business that took him much from

home. And at Barnet, which was where they lived, they stayed with Mistress Goodfellow, who, said Rose, was an old woman, and sometimes cross-grained. But her father, she said, was the most admirable man that ever lived, for he could sing and dance, and play music upon several instruments, and tell stories and legends, so that when he was at home they were as happy as the day is long. But sometimes, she said, he was away a long time, and she was lonely until he came again, bringing her various rare things which he had found in his travels, and then they were happy once more. And now and then he took her with him when the weather was fine, she riding before him on his great horse, and he telling her stories of the fine houses they passed, or the dark woods through which they rode. Much did she tell me too about her father's horse, which understood him when he talked to it as if it had been a Christian, and would follow him

about, and ate bread and sugar out of his hand, and had more than once saved his life, though how she did not know.

In discourse like this Rose Lisle and I passed the afternoon, and I forgot the ache in my head in listening to her conversation. But as it drew near supper-time I was forced to leave her, and said good-bye to her with much regret, and she went down the lane into Wentbridge while I climbed the valley slope and went across the meadows home. And though I told Jacob Trusty about my tumble from the elm tree, yet I said nothing either to him or to my sister Lucy about Rose Lisle. Only I thought much about her, and wished that she was going to stay in our neighbourhood, so that Lucy and myself might take her with us when we went birds'-nesting, or blackberrying, or nutting.

Upon the next afternoon I set off again to the old sheepfold, determined to climb the

elm with success. But I left Lucy at home, not being minded to let any one see me tumble down again. However, as fortune would have it, the storm-cock escaped once more; for I had no sooner got into the woods above Wentbridge Mill than I met Rose Lisle, who was once more gathering the primroses that were now springing up in every nook and corner. And so through the woods we went, as on the previous day, and rambled in and out all the afternoon until we came to the mill again, where we stood beside the stream and watched the bits of stick and twig race by.

While we stood there I became aware of some one calling to us, and looking across the stream saw a man on horseback, at sight of whom Rose raised a glad cry.

"'Tis my father!" said she. "Will Dale, 'tis my father. Let us run round by the mill-bridge."

But I saw that the man was going to leap

his horse across the stream, which is there about twenty feet in width. And calling to us to stand where we were, he turned his horse about and brought him at the Went, and the great brute tucked up his thighs and came clear across with a motion like a swallow flying. The man gave him an encouraging pat as he dismounted, and throwing the bridle loose, took Rose in his arms and lifted her up and kissed her.

"Well, my princess!" said he. "Here is thy father back again, safe and sound once more. Thy cheeks are the rosier, my beauty, for thy little outing."

And then he kissed her again on both cheeks, and I saw his eyes sparkle as if it were a great delight to him to see Rose again. He was a tall, fine man, this Philip Lisle, and looked like the sort that order and command other men naturally. His greatness was not of the sort that I was familiar with, for he was not like my father—

tall and broad and big in every way, but rather slender and elegantly fashioned, and more like a willow-wand than an oak-tree. Nevertheless, there was that in his face which gave an impression of power; and I could not help noticing that his hands, which were very white and shapely, were also tense as bands of steel when he grasped anything. Looking at him I no longer wondered that Rose was dark, for Philip Lisle's hair and moustachios were like jet, and the eyes were black as the delicate eyebrows above them. He was dressed very much finer than most in our parts, and looked, in fact, like one of the gay cavaliers that sometimes rode by our gates along the Great North Road. His horse, too, was finely caparisoned, and there were two pistols peeping out of the holsters on each side of the saddle, which shone so in the sunlight that I was sure they were fashioned of silver.

"And who is this bonny lad?" said Philip

Lisle, turning to me, with Rose still perched on his shoulder.

"It is William Dale, father, and he lives over the bend of the hill yonder," said Rose, while I stood and stared at the man's handsome face and fine clothes, and clean lost my tongue for admiration; "and he has shown me where the primroses grow best, and where the birds'-nests are, and where he fell down the crags from the jackdaws' nest."

"Ah, a Dale? Lad, I should have known thee. The Dales were always big men, as I have heard, though I never saw but two—thy grandfather and thy father. Thou wilt be a big man like them, Will."

"Does my father know you then, sir?" I asked, being surprised to hear him speak thus familiarly of my family.

He laughed and stroked his horse's neck, the creature having come up to him and pushed his nose under Philip Lisle's arm.

"There are few, lad, that do not know me. However—— But what thinkest thou of my horse, Will? Is't not a beauty? Ye have no horse in all the three Ridings like this. Cæsar his name is, for he is the emperor of the horse race, as Cæsar was of the human. However, he, too, like Cæsar, may fall a victim to treachery. But thy master will be there, old friend, will not he? Yea, whenever death comes, let it be red death, or black death, in bed or afield, it will find thee and me together."

The horse lifted its head and whinnied, and pushed its nose against the man's face, and I stood dumb to see the marvellous understanding between them. For it seemed to comprehend exactly what he said, which was what I had never seen in a horse before, save that they learn and obey the few words of command by which men make known their desires.

"But what talk I of death," said Philip

Lisle, "with two such rosy faces before me? Children, would ye like a ride on horse Cæsar's back? Will, climb into my saddle, and I will put Rose behind thee. So, put thy feet in the stirrup-leathers. Thy legs are too short yet to reach the stirrups, though thou wilt quickly mend that matter. And now have no fear, but hold thy bridle tight; and Rose, my princess, cling firm to Will's waist; and thou, Cæsar, remember what thou carriest, and be on thy best behaviour. And now, off!"

And away we went over the ground on Cæsar's back at a swift canter, and yet travelling as safely as if we had been in an easy chair. For I had but to keep my knees well pressed to the saddle, as my father had taught me, and Rose had but to circle my waist with her dainty arms, and beyond that we had no trouble to take. But never before or since have I crossed a horse which went over the ground as that did. For it was

like the motion of a greyhound, which runs straight and smooth and swift, and makes never a sound as the soft feet touch the ground and fly onward. And so we circled down the bank and turned, and came round again to where Philip Lisle stood. And he lifted us down and patted Cæsar's neck.

"Thou hast never ridden horse like that, Will, eh?" said he. "Ah, this horse hath soul in him, and mind. Well, we must hence. Rose, I am going to take thee home. We shall sleep at Retford to-night, and so say good-bye to Will Dale."

She came up to me where I stood silent and sad, and lifted up her little red rosebud of a mouth to kiss me. And, why I know not, I was so moved, that I put my arm about her neck and kissed her again and again, and then turned and cast down my eyes, and, I dare say, blushed as red as any June rose.

"Nay, lad," said Philip Lisle, "be not

ashamed. Alack, I wonder if ye will kiss next time ye meet? Who knows?"

"Oh, father," cried Rose, "bring me again to see Will."

"Wouldst like to see Rose again, Will?" he asked.

"Yes, sir, very much," said I.

"Then thou shalt, but when I cannot say. Nevertheless thou shalt. And now farewell, Will. Stay, there is a guinea for thee. Put it in thy breeches pocket, lad."

He swung into the saddle, and, stooping down, lifted Rose before him and put one arm round her. And again he cried, "Farewell, Will Dale," and again Rose kissed the tips of her fingers to me, and he called to Cæsar, and the horse started forward like an arrow out of a bow, and away they went along the valley, and Rose's voice came to me on the wind, crying, "Good-bye, dear Will, good-bye!" And then they were out of sight, and I turned away and climbed the

hill, and went straight to Jacob Trusty, who was bedding down his twelve fat oxen for the night.

"Jacob," said I, when I made sure that we were all alone in the straw shed, "Jacob, did you ever hear of a man called Philip Lisle?"

"Ay, marry," said Jacob, sticking his fork into a great heap of straw, and lifting the latter on his back with a prodigious grunt. "Ay, marry, have I! What, man, and so hast thou. Did I never tell 'ee of Black Phil?"

"What, Black Phil the highwayman? Is he the same as Philip Lisle?"

"Od's mercy, ay, and no other! Ay, Philip Lisle he was called once upon a time, but now Black Phil, by reason of his dark face. Natheless, 'tis a gentleman born, and hath rank and blood. But what matter—he is a highwayman, and must finally swing on gallow tree. For look 'ee, William, boy, as

you go through the world you will see one thing—namely, that if a man give himself to evil courses he may prosper for awhile, but 'tis the gallows in the end that rewardeth him, even as it saith in Holy Writ."

And Jacob went down the fold with his straw, and into the beast-place, and there made such a rattling and shouting amongst the fat oxen, that the whole place shook again. Which done, he came leisurely across the fold, picking up a fork full of straw here and there, and coming into the straw-shed again, continued his discourse.

"This trade of highwayman, William, boy, is a parlous one, and many a man that hath gone into it hath oft wished he could get out on't as easy as he went in. For look you, lad, your highwayman, though he ride a good horse and wear fine clothes, doth neither at his own expense, but rather at the cost of them whom he robbeth. Likewise he is against the law, which is a bad matter for any

man. Howbeit, I had liefer be robbed by a highwayman than a lawyer, for your lawyer laughs in your face while he turns out your pockets, but your highwayman is as courtly as any fine court-madam. These things have I noticed, William, boy, in going through the world; for, though I be of this parish born and bred, I have travelled, yea, I have travelled even to the city of Lincoln, and again as far as Brough Hill in the county of Westmoreland, which last is as heathen a land as ever man knew, and full of high mountains and deep precipices. But as for this Black Phil now—'tis a good heart, and the poor folk do think a deal of him. For if he rob a lord, or maybe a bishop, riding along the road in his own carriage, what doth he do but gallop off to some place where there is a hard winter or griping times, and there share the money? So that there is not a poor man 'twixt York and London that would not give Black Phil shelter and

help if he were pursued by king's officers. However, he hath not ridden in these parts this five year. And now, William, lad, go beg a mug of small beer from thy good mother, for my mouth is as dry as any lime-kiln."

When I had carried Jacob his mug of small ale, I left him and went and walked by myself in the garden. And there I thought over the events of the past two days, which had been more astonishing than any that had ever come into my young life previously. I had seen a real highwayman, and had talked with him, and he spoke like other men, and was habited like a gentleman, and was, I was sure, a man of kind heart, by the way he caressed his daughter and spoke to me. And I felt very sorry for Philip Lisle, and wondered what little Rose would do when they hanged her father, as they would do in the end, because Jacob Trusty said so. However, I decided that in that

case I would beg my father to let Rose live with us, knowing that she and Lucy would agree well. And I further thought that in that case Philip Lisle would leave me his horse Cæsar, with the two silver pistols and fine saddle, but I did not wish the king's officers to catch him for all that.

Now, while I walked round the garden with my hands in my pockets, I found my fingers clinging round Philip Lisle's guinea, and fell a-wondering what I should do with it. I was very shy of speaking to any one about my two new friends, and I knew that if I showed my money I should have to tell how I had come by it. It was not probable, I knew, that I should be allowed to keep the guinea if my mother knew whence it came. But, though I set no store by money, having no occasion for it, I was not minded to give up my guinea, for Philip Lisle had spoken kindly to me in giving it, and it might be that it really was his own to give. So I

went into the house, and found a little leaden box which Jacob Trusty had once bestowed upon me, and I wrapped up the guinea within a sheet of paper, inside which I placed a primrose that Rose Lisle had pinned in my coat that afternoon, and I put the paper in the leaden box, and fetched a spade and dug a hole in the corner of my own patch of garden, and buried the leaden box two feet deep, and put stones above and below it, and stamped the earth well in, and so hid out of sight the connecting link 'twixt me and Philip Lisle.

CHAPTER V.

OF MY FIRST GOING TO SCHOOL.

UPON the very evening of the day whereon I had buried Philip Lisle's guinea in a corner of my garden, there came to our house Parson Drumbleforth, who had walked along the highway from Darrington to hold converse with my father and mother. And our Lucy, seeing him approach from afar off, ran quickly indoors, and told my mother, who immediately caused a fire to be lighted in the best parlour, the spring evenings being ofttimes chilly for old bones, and Parson Drumbleforth having got past his vigour. So presently he came in sight, and

advanced along the garden walks, and was met at the door by my mother with a respectful courtesy. But he would have naught of the best parlour.

"Let me go into your own chamber, Mistress Dale," said he, "where is, I know, such an easy-chair as would fit judge or bishop, let alone a humble clerk, and where the fire hath burnt all day. Your best parlour, sure, is very fine accommodation, but cold, mistress, cold."

"Why, surely," said my mother, "an I had known your Reverence was coming there should have been a fire lighted hours ago. However, my own parlour hath had a fire in it since noon."

Whereupon she led him to the easy-chair in her own room, and Lucy and myself followed in and paid our respects to the Vicar, and admired his white bands and the silver buckles of his shoes, and looked at his staff, which was a clouded cane with a heavy

silver knob of great value. And the Parson having stretched forth his hands to the blaze, and asked us how we did, and if we were faithful in our duties to our parents, I was sent forth into the yard to find my father, who had gone out awhile before to consult Timothy Grass and Jacob Trusty about certain yearlings which he had just bought at Wakefield fair. And finding him, he at once broke off his discourse and went into the house and greeted the Vicar, and brought forth tobacco and pipes, and they both smoked, and my mother went into the kitchen and made a pitcher of mulled ale, of which grateful drink Parson Drumble-forth was an admirer. And my father and the vicar discoursed of the weather, and the crop of lambs, and the prospect of the coming harvests, hay and corn, and Lucy and I listened and strove hard to behave ourselves with propriety. And the mulled ale having been brought in and the glasses

filled, the Vicar pledged us all and commended the drink mightily, after which the pitcher was put on the hob to keep warm, and my mother sat down to her needle.

"Master and Mistress Dale," presently said Parson Drumbleforth, "I am come here to-night on an important matter. Ye have here a great lad—stand up, William, my child, and let us look at thee; why, thou art nearly to my shoulder already!—ye have here, I say, a great lad, who is fast growing towards manhood."

"Oh, sir!" cried my mother. "Manhood! Why, 'tis but a child."

"Softly, softly, mistress. I say manhood, and rightly. For before ye see the change he will be a youth, and then a man, ay, and a bigger man than his father."

"He will, he will," said my father. "Ay, he will be an inch bigger than I am, all ways. However, I am six foot three in my stockings."

"'Tis a fine lad, indeed," said Parson Drumbleforth, measuring me with a critical eye. "Wherefore the greater responsibility resteth upon you."

"Your own boy, sir, Master John, is a big-made boy, too," said my mother, anxious to return the Vicar's compliments.

"So, so. A sturdy knave is Jack, and strong enough, but rather broad than long. However, your mention of Jack, Mistress Dale, brings me back to where I set out from. It is time, Master Dale, that this great lad went to school."

"He hath learnt from me, sir," said my mother, looking anxiously at me. "What I could teach him he hath learnt, so that now he can read his Catechism in the Prayer-book, and knoweth his duty, and——"

"Mistress Dale," interrupted Parson Drumbleforth, "I know well that you are a scholar, and able to impart knowledge to your children. As for this little maiden, let

her continue to learn from her mother. But as for Will here, let him to school, where men will teach him, and he will mix with his fellows."

"But, sir," said my mother, "there is no school at hand. For it is too far for him to walk twice a day 'twixt here and Pontefract."

"Then he must board with the master, my good friend Dr. Parsons," said Parson Drumbleforth. "He will not charge you overmuch for the lad's eating and sleeping. On a Saturday let him come home, so that he may enjoy the benefit of my ministry on a Sunday, and on a Monday morning let him be off again bright and early."

"He hath never slept away from home in his life," said my mother. "And I always fear damp beds in strange houses. Our own, sir, if not slept in for awhile, are aired for days before we use them again, but all folks are not so particular."

"Tut, tut, mistress, the beds will be aired,

I warrant. Mistress Parsons is a careful housewife. What say'st thou, Master Dale?"

"I am for the lad to go," said my father. "'Twill do him no harm to live with others of his age."

"'Tis a good school, the Queen's School at Pontefract," said the Vicar. "My own lad, Jack, hath been there since Christmas, and though somewhat of a wooden-head, he hath picked up a good deal. Wouldst like to go with Jack to school, Will?"

"Yes, sir, very much," I answered.

And in the end it was decided that I should go; and my father promised to ride into Pontefract the next morning, and there make arrangements with Dr. Parsons about my board and lodging in the master's house. And so overjoyed was I at the prospect that I could hardly sleep that night. But early next morning I rose and sought out Jacob Trusty, and told him the news.

"Thou wilt have to fight, William," said he; "yea, thou wilt have to fight. However, I have no fear for thee. And when thou hast fought and beaten the biggest lad in the school, thou wilt be much respected. For in going through the world, William, boy, thou wilt see one thing, namely, that men never so much respect their fellows as when the same have shown their power. Wherefore remember to hit hard and straight, and to care nothing for what thou gettest in return."

And then returned my father from Pontefract, with news that he had made arrangements with Dr. Parsons, and I was to go the next Monday; and he had seen Mrs. Parsons, who had promised faithfully to see that my bed was duly aired, upon which assurance my mother plucked up some small comfort, though she was not at all reconciled to the idea of parting with me. And after that all was hurry and bustle in our house,

for my mother must see to my new shirts and handkerchiefs, and Lucy must broider my name upon each article, and there was repairing of garments and washing and ironing, so that, as my father said, I might have been going on a voyage to the Indies instead of only to Pontefract. But I have observed that mothers do take a pleasure in making a fuss after their children, and are never so pleased as when busying themselves in that way. It is something which a man cannot understand, but women with children to care for understand it readily.

And so the Monday morning came round, and Timothy Grass harnessed one of the horses to our light spring cart, and my box was put therein and my father took the reins, and I kissed my mother and Lucy, with many admonitions to the latter to take care of my dog Rover, whom I had perforce to leave behind me, and away we drove down the road. I felt an important personage

that morning, for I had not only a new suit of homespun upon me, but in the pockets of my breeches there lay a new crown piece given me by my mother, and a shilling presented to me by Lucy, and Jacob Trusty had given me a knife which I had often envied him the possession of, and which had three blades, and a pick for taking stones out of a horse's hoof.

On the road between Darrington and Pontefract we came upon Master John Drumbleforth, who was trudging his way to school. My father pulled up the horse, and civilly inquired if Master John would accept of a lift, a question which he at once answered by climbing into the spring cart.

"Why," said he, "I had at any time sooner ride than walk, as you may well imagine, Master Dale. And so thou art going to school, Will? Well, I will look after thee, if need be."

He was a rather solid, heavy-looking lad, this Jack Drumbleforth, with a round shining face, and big limbs, but no great height. Unlike his father, the Vicar, he was no deep nor apt scholar, but rather delighted in sports and games, and in an outdoor life. Nevertheless, he was not so dull as to lack observation, and knowing that learning is a thing which helps every man that strives to obtain it, he worked hard, in a plodding laboured fashion, and acquired some knowledge. There were lads of his own age of more brilliant parts, who dashed ahead at a great pace, and could write Latin verses ere ever Jack Drumbleforth had mastered his *hic hæc hoc*, but in the end the tortoise caught the hare, for though Jack was undeniably slow he was very sure.

The new world into which I was now plunged furnished me with much matter of surprise and wonder. Until that time I had seen little of the world, my observations

having been confined to an occasional visit to Pontefract market with my parents, which excursions had been great events in my life, and were eagerly expected and pleasurably regretted. Now, however, I was thrown into the company of some hundred and twenty lads, whose ages ranged from ten to fifteen years. Also I was brought under the rule of the Reverend Dr. Parsons, the head-master, and his assistants, who were younger men, but also scholars and clergymen, and exceeding grave. There was also Mrs. Parsons, the doctor's wife, who was a motherly lady, and took as much care of us who lived in the head-master's house as if we had been her own children. For if we needed it she dosed us with medicine, and if one did cut or bruise himself she repaired the damage with lint or oils, and there were poulticings for colds and gruel for such as were unfit for stronger meat, and the weakly were tended with much care. Because of all

these things good Mrs. Parsons was much thought of by the lads, and highly respected by their parents. She was a little bustling woman, always cheerful and always ready, and I have since thought that she manifested the greater care for us because it had not pleased Providence that she should have children of her own.

As for Dr. Parsons, he was a little man, somewhat stout, very nimble and active, red-faced and smiling, a strict master, never sparing the birch, and always just in his decisions; wherefore there was hardly a lad in the school who did not feel that praise or punishment was properly meted out. For he confused not the sharp lad with the slow, and made a fine distinction between them that attained knowledge by leaps and bounds, and them that reached it by gradual and constant labour. The dull lad who plodded on patiently met in him a kind and indulgent master; the clever but idle boy received

from him a vast amount of watching and of castigation. Half-done work he could not abide, and would rather have had a slow lad work at a task for two hours and know it than see a more sharp-witted one master it in ten minutes.

"Thou art a great lad, William Dale," said Dr. Parsons to me, when my father had bidden me farewell and departed, "and I doubt not thy mind runneth more on birds'-nests and such-like than on learning. Nay, lad, that is but natural, and none but a fool would have it otherwise. I shall not plague thee overmuch with learning. This counsel, however, I give thee—what thou dost learn, learn well, and be not ashamed if it takes thee two days to master what a sharper lad would master in one. It is better to know why a thing is done than how it is done. Get to the bottom of everything. Let me see thee work steadily, eating thy meals with a good appetite, and behaving towards me

and thy fellows as to thy parents and sister. So shall I be satisfied with thee, William. And now, perchance thou wilt get fighting with some of these lads of mine. Well, 'tis one of those things which our perverse human nature prompteth us to. However, William Dale, bear this in mind—never fight until thou art bound to do so. Be not the aggressor. He that gives cause of offence deserveth punishing. So when thou art forced to fight, fight not in anger, but with cool temper, and remember that a shot straight out from the left shoulder is a wonderful thing to cool down thy adversary. And now let us to school."

When I had had time to look round me, I discovered that of all my new associates there were but two of whom I had any knowledge. One of these was John Drumbleforth, the other was Dennis Watson, the son of that Watson of Castle Hill to whom I have already made reference as being the

enemy of my family. This Dennis was a lad somewhat my senior, of a dark and rather forbidding countenance, very masterful, and apt to bear malice against any who fell under his displeasure. Save that I had now and then seen him about his father's land I knew nothing of him. Between a Dale and a Watson there was never any speech. If we did but meet in the highways we passed each other without word or look. Wherefore I was not over-well pleased to find Dennis Watson amongst my schoolmates. For though I had been taught to hate no man, yet I had a hearty dislike to any representative of the race which had been our enemies for many a generation.

Out of consideration for my newness, Mrs. Parsons put me to sleep in the chamber in which slept Jack Drumbleforth and two other boys of a like age. With these three I naturally became closely acquainted. The name of one of my new room-mates was

Thomas Thorpe, the son of a steward on one of the neighbouring great estates; the other was Benjamin Tuckett, nephew of Mr. John Tuckett, the grocer in the market-place. Ben Tuckett had neither father nor mother, and his uncle's wife having an objection to great boys in the house, Ben was sent to Dr. Parsons until he should be of an age to be apprenticed to some trade. He was a round-faced, pleasant-tempered lad, always lively, always willing to do any one a good turn, so that he was universally liked. Between Ben and me and Tom Thorpe and Jack Drumbleforth grew up a strong friendship, which lasted many years, until death severed it.

Now from the very first day of my going to school, Dennis Watson made a dead set at me, pouring out upon me as it were all the hatred and malice which his house had for mine. Being somewhat more experienced of the world than I—for he had been at

school two years when I went there—he had an advantage over me in some respects, and failed not to use it. He had a following of his own amongst the boys, all those who served under his leadership being noted as comprising the evilly disposed portion of our little community. Presently it became the fashion among these lads to make sport of me, annoying me in whatever way their ingenuity could devise. Thus, if I were engaged in preparing my tasks, I should find a pot of ink spilt over my fair copies, or if I were playing with my fellows in the yard, some one would rudely knock me over, as if by accident. Howbeit, being of an easy nature, I took little notice of these matters until one day came when, by the advice of my three room-mates, I determined to stand it no longer. So when one of Dennis Watson's men, as if by accident, trod rudely on my toes, I seized him by the collar, and marched him up to where

Dennis and his chief associates were standing together. And then I think the whole school saw that something was about to happen, for it gathered round us, and I suddenly found Jack Drumbleforth and Ben Tuckett at my elbow, and Tom Thorpe making his way to me through the throng.

"Now," said I, shaking the boy, a small one, who had stamped upon my toes, "the next time you or any other treads on me, or spills ink on my paper, or makes other like mistake, I shall take his head and knock it against the wall! That is fair warning."

Then Dennis Watson laughed in a sneering fashion, and his mates echoed him.

"Pooh!" quoth he; "we all know that William Dale has not heart to fight even a small boy, let alone one his own size."

"Do you?" I said, going straight to

him; "then, Dennis Watson, as you are older than I, and as big, I will fight you now."

But he would have kept out of that if he could. Nevertheless, his own party edged him on to fight, and mine insisted on it, and presently we were all behind the school-wall, and our seconds were holding our coats. And I, remembering the doctor's counsel to keep cool, kept cool as long as I could, and at the right moment I gave my opponent one from the left shoulder which spoiled his looks for many a day. And after that there was no more teasing of me, but I was much respected.

Two days afterwards came Dennis Watson to me, as I crossed the playground alone. "Will Dale," said he, with a strange look of hatred on his face, "I hate you, and always shall. And however long I live, I will cause you such trouble as will make you wish you had never been born."

Now at the time I made light of this threat, and laughed at it. But I remembered it many a time in the years which followed.

CHAPTER VI.

OF THE DISPUTE IN THE MARKET-PLACE.

IT was in the middle of spring when I was first taken to school, and my life till the end of the following summer was comparatively uneventful. On Saturdays I went home, to tell Jacob Trusty of my doings during the week, and to receive his counsel and admonition on various matters. Those week-end visits home were great events. On the Saturday I visited all my old haunts, took out my dog, saw to my garden, and went round the farmstead renewing acquaintance with man and beast. On the Sunday we went to church as usual. Then came

Monday morning again, and I wended my way to school once more, generally catching up Jack Drumbleforth on the road. Having fought and beaten Dennis Watson, there was little else left me to do in that line, for no lad of my own age and size cared to fight with me, and the elder lads were, of course, above battling with their junior. So I went on with my tasks in a steady and laborious fashion, not being over ready of perception, but still determined to do what lay in me. In this manner of life the months passed on quietly. But just as summer was over, and we had brought home the last load of the corn-harvest, there came matters which changed the whole course of my life.

I have already told you that between the Watsons of Castle Hill and the Dales of Dale's Field there was an ancient root of contention in the shape of a piece of land lying between our respective estates. The ownership of this, which was but a strip of

meadow, had been disputed 'twixt Dale and Watson for many a generation, though neither side had ever sought the aid of the law in order to settle matters once and for all. Formerly, if one house had sent flocks to graze on the debateable ground, the other had forthwith driven the offending animals away. Sometimes blows had arisen from this proceeding, and the servants from each farmstead had turned out with quarter-staff or cudgel, and fought fiercely one with another. But for nearly fifty years previous to my time neither side had claimed the land, though both were equally careful that no right of way should be established across it by third parties. Yet although matters had been quiet, the red spirit of dislike and resentment ran strong as ever, and of all men in that neighbourhood, Rupert Watson of Castle Hill was the only one that my father never held speech with.

It was the first week of September, 1631,

and by permission of Dr. Parsons I had come home from school on the Thursday, in order to be present at our harvest-supper, which was a great event, and not to be missed on any account. There were gathered together on that occasion all our servants, male and female, all that ever worked for us on odd days during the year, such as at turnip-hoeing or sheep-shearing times, and with them came their wives and families, so that our great barn was well filled. There were also two or three farmers of our acquaintance from the neighbouring villages, and sometimes Parson Drumbleforth was present to hallow the ceremony, as he indeed was upon this occasion, and with him Jack, who had been permitted to beg off from school. Great doings there were at our harvest-supper, namely, an abundance of provisions and good cheer, and after that dancing to the music of the village fiddler, who sat on a tub in the centre, and played

for all he was worth until neither man nor maiden could dance any longer. Nor were the horses forgotten, which had worked so hard during the harvest-month, for they on that night had each an extra feed of corn.

On this particular occasion, when the supper was well over, and Tom Treddle, the fiddler, had just got into the swing of his first tune, Will White, the miller of Smeaton, drew my father aside into a corner, and began to talk to him.

"I am afraid, Master Dale," said Will, "that you are going to have trouble," and he nodded his head in the direction of the woods that bound our farm.

"What is it, Will?" asked my father.

"Why, certainly," answered the miller, "'tis none of my business, and maybe I ought not to meddle with it. But you see my nearest way from home to your place here, Master Dale, lies across the fields. Now, as I came along to-night, I saw that Rupert

Watson has turned out his horses into that piece of land which he says is his, and which you say is yours. So therefore I say, I fear there will be trouble."

"Trouble there will be!" answered my father. "And I am sorry for it, for the old sore has lain unopened these fifty years, and should have healed for what I would have done. But Rupert Watson must not turn his cattle on my land. Well, join the dancers, good Will, and I will consider what's to be done."

Now, it was not easy to decide upon a course of action, because there was sure to be trouble, whatever conduct were pursued. For if my father patiently suffered Rupert Watson's horses to occupy the land, it would amount to an acknowledgment that the land was not ours; and if, on the other hand, he drove them away, there would be resistance on the part of the Watsons, and then would come fighting. However, by the

time the dancers had all tired, and the folks were nearly all gone home, my father had made up his mind. So he called up to him Jacob Trusty and Timothy Grass and Reuben Larkspur, and all our regular labourers, ten men and youths in all, and began to talk to them in the barn. "Lads," said he, "ye know that there is a strip of meadow-land lying between Watson's estate and mine which we both claim? Mine I believe it to be, else I would not claim it. It hath always been understood to be mine, as Jacob here will tell you."

"Dale's land it was, and is, and always will be," said Jacob.

"Well," continued my father, "for fifty years the matter has been quiet, but Rupert Watson has seen fit to break the peace at last. To-night he has turned his horses into the land in question, thinking, no doubt, that our merry-making would prevent us from noticing the matter. However,

Miller White saw them, and told me of it. Now, I am not going to allow Rupert Watson's horses to feed on my lands. Nor will I simply turn them out. I will take such measure as will lead, I doubt not, to a final settlement of this matter. What say you, Jacob?"

"It hath gone on long enough," said Jacob. "Let it be settled and done with."

"'Tis good counsel. Now, lads, there are ten of ye, and I make eleven. Take each of ye a good stout staff, lest we be attacked, and then follow me, and we will take Rupert Watson's horses, and put them into pound at Darrington. Then he will have to settle with the pinder ere he can regain them, and if he likes to take the law of me, he is welcome."

So the men, with much approval, went for their staves, and prepared to carry out my father's wishes.

Now, as it happened, Parson Drumble-

forth had gone home a good three hours before that, but Jack had remained to sleep at our house, and he and I had lurked in a dark corner of the barn to hear what my father said to the men. When we heard of the proposed expedition against Rupert Watson's horses, nothing would content us but that we must go; and knowing that if we asked leave we should not get it, we waited till all had left the barn, and then ran away into the fields, and hid under a hedge until my father and his men came along, behind whom we followed in the moonlight until we reached the debateable strip of land, and saw the horses, twelve in number, cropping the grass. We had expected that some spy would have been sent by Rupert Watson to watch over the horses, in case of an attack; but he, fancying we should all be busy with the harvest-supper, had left them alone, and our men had no difficulty in surrounding them and driving

them away. Then Jack and I ran home as hard as possible, and had only just retired to bed when my father came in to tell my mother that the younger men had taken the horses to the pinfold at Darrington.

The next day passed away peacefully enough with us, but towards night came one from Darrington, who told us that at noon Rupert Watson had ridden up in a great passion, and had demanded his horses of the pinder, and threatened all manner of violence against those who had impounded them. To whom the pinder, being in the right, and having the law behind him, made answer that he knew nought of the rights or wrongs of the dispute 'twixt Dales and Watsons, but that the horses being come into his pound, should not go thence until the pinning-fee were paid. Which fee Rupert Watson was forced in the end to disburse, and so departed, vowing vengeance on us Dales

root and branch. When my mother heard this she was troubled, but my father bade her be of good cheer.

On the Saturday morning, I accompanied my father to market, my mother staying at home, which, as events proved, was a fortunate thing, for she would have been sore put about by the scene which followed our arrival in the market-place. It was rather late when we reached the town, and, after putting up our horse and cart, went into the street to do our business, and the frequenters of the market were already gathered in full force about the Butter Cross and the Beast Fair. My father had said, as we came along, that he should probably have some words with Rupert Watson if they met, and I was therefore on the look-out for our enemy, but for a long time I saw nothing of him. In such a small place, however, we were bound to meet him, and meet him we did, as we went to dine at the

ordinary. For there he stood on the steps of the inn, a tall, dark-faced man, with a look of anger and hatred on his countenance, which reminded me of his son Dennis.

Rupert Watson saw us coming along the street, and I saw him square himself so as to fill the doorway of the inn. There were some twenty or thirty farmers standing round, and they, knowing what had taken place, looked on with much curiosity as my father drew near.

"Keep by me, Will," said my father; "thou shalt come to no harm—nor shall I for that matter."

When we were a few yards from him, Rupert Watson broke out upon my father in a loud voice, so that men came running along the market-place and from the shambles to see who it was that caused such a commotion.

"So, Master Dale!" shouted Rupert Watson; "so you dare to show your face

here after your work t'other night! It were better, perhaps, that you were in gaol for a horse-thief. A pretty jest, to steal another's cattle and clap them into pound! An you and your men had not been drunk with your rioting, I would take the law of you!"

Then my father stood squarely in front of him, and looked Rupert Watson in the face. "Master Watson," said he, "when you talk of jest and riot, I understand you not. What I do understand is this—that you turned your horses upon my land, from whence I removed them to the parish pound. And I warn you, Master Watson, in the presence of these gentlemen, that this I shall do again if ever you offend in like manner."

Then the cloud on Rupert Watson's face grew black indeed, and he poured upon my father a torrent of vulgar abuse. "Thy land!" quoth he. "Land of thine or thy fathers it never was. And I will turn my

cattle upon it this night, and if thou, or any of thy men, dare to set foot upon the land, I will shoot the trespassers through the head!"

"Master Watson," said my father, "I care nothing for your threats. What I can do for myself, I will do; what I cannot do, the law shall do for me."

"Ay, ay," said some one in the crowd; "law is a good word. Your two families have disputed this matter for generations; why not go to law, and have done with it?"

"As for shooting of men through the head," said another, "'tis poor talk, and I trow the magistrates would have somewhat to say to it."

"Who asked thy counsel?" said Rupert Watson. "A man hath a right to defend his own, hath he not? The land, I say, is mine."

"I neither know nor care whose the land

is," said an old farmer at our elbow; "but this I do know, Rupert, that thou hast never put cattle on it since Castle Hill came into thy hands. Why hast suddenly fallen in love with it? 'Tis but an acre or two at most."

"The land, I say, is mine," said Rupert Watson once more. "And mine it shall be. So look to yourself, William Dale, for if I find you or yours setting foot upon it I will shoot you, I say, as I would a dog!"

"I care not for your threatening, Master Watson," answered my father. "You may take your own course. But if ever I find cattle of yours on my land again, into the parish pound they will go. And now stand aside, and let me and my lad pass."

And therewith he strode up on a sudden, and Rupert Watson, with one glance at his great form and determined face, slunk out of the doorway, and we went inside the inn, and dined at the ordinary. And while we were dining, I saw Rupert Watson enter,

and retire into a corner with a little person whose manners reminded me of a weasel. My father told me this was Lawyer Sharp, of Wakefield.

"'Tis the most unscrupulous attorney that ever lived, Will, boy," said my father, "and I doubt not he and Watson are contriving some scheme against me, which they are welcome to do. I care for nothing of their invention."

It was vastly to my liking that most of those to whom we spoke that day sided with my father, and condemned Rupert Watson, both for turning out his horses on the debateable piece of land, and likewise for creating a disturbance at the inn-door. For though no man, not even the oldest, could rightly say if the land belonged to Dales or to Watsons, they yet remembered that for fifty years the trouble had been allowed to rest, and that it was now revived through no fault of my father's.

"Rupert Watson," said the old farmer who had spoken at the inn-door, "is in the wrong this time. Let sleeping dogs lie, say I. Now he has stirred the dog up, and must not complain if it show its teeth. But mind you, Master Dale, I know not if the land be yours or his."

"It has always been held to be ours in our family," said my father.

"Ay, marry, and to be theirs in their family. My advice is, go to law, if ye can settle it in no different fashion. Though law is but a parlous method of deciding a question like yon. Whether ye lose or win, the lawyers will have your money."

"It is for him to decide," said my father; "I shall do nothing—only this, that if he sends his cattle on the land again, I shall again put them into pound."

So we went home that Saturday, and that evening, and for many a following evening, strict watch was kept upon the narrow strip

of meadow-land, for my father was determined that every inch of his acres should be protected. But Rupert Watson made no further movement, and the weeks passed by till it was October, and we heard no more of the matter.

Nevertheless our enemy—for I can call him by no other name, considering his deeds—was not idle in his efforts to vex and annoy us. For one Saturday, early in October, as I was talking to Jacob Trusty in the fold, there came riding in at our gate a man on a brown mare, whose face was strange to both of us, and who immediately hailed us with an inquiry if this were Dale's Field? I said "Yes"; whereupon he consulted a paper which he drew from his vest, and then asked if William Dale were about, to which I answered that my father was at market, and would not be home until five or six o'clock.

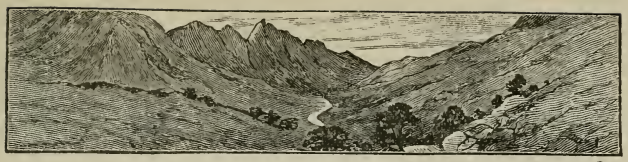
"Then I must needs get off my horse,

lad," said the stranger, "and wait his return. Dost think a feed of corn could be found for my horse? He has carried me four and twenty miles this morning, and needs a rest."

I handed the horse over to one of our lads, and conducted the stranger into the house, where he was received by my mother, to whom he made a very polite bow.

"Master Dale, mistress, is not at home, I understand, but will return anon. With your permission I will rest myself until he comes, for I cannot go away until I have seen him. I am a sheriff's officer, and have a writ to serve upon him at the suit of one Rupert Watson."

So it seemed that our enemy was going to have the law of us after all.



CHAPTER VII.

OF OUR COMING FROM YORK.

MY mother, woman-like, was somewhat disturbed at the idea of having aught to do with law matters, and she looked exceedingly grave when the sheriff's officer announced his mission. But my father, coming home a little later, made light of the matter, and bade the man sit down and eat and drink, and conversed with him on the weather and similar matters, so that the bearer of Rupert Watson's writ presently departed much fortified in mind and body.

"It is the best thing that could have happened," said my father, talking to my mother

about the matter, "for now the question will be decided and done with. If the law says the land is mine, mine it will be for ever; if 'tis Rupert Watson's, then the law will say so. And perhaps the old enmity between us will die out. I have no wish to live in strife with any man."

"For all that," said my mother, "you will never be friendly with Rupert Watson. For he has a bad heart, and is a cruel man, and with such I am sure you will never agree."

"Friends, perhaps not," answered my father. "But it might come to us exchanging a good-day like Christians, instead of riding by on the high-road as if we were sworn enemies. However, if this matter be settled, our children may live at peace and even friendship, if Rupert and I never do."

Now I knew that could never be, because Dennis had sworn that he would hate me for ever, and I knew he meant it. Nothing, I felt sure, would ever make Dennis forgive

me for thrashing him, and I, on my part, felt no desire to make friends with him. I had an instinctive dislike for Dennis, and felt that oil and water would mix sooner than he and I. However, I said nothing of this to my father or mother.

When Jacob Trusty heard of the law proceedings, he exercised much thought upon the matter, and often discussed it with me of a Saturday afternoon.

"That the land is ours," said Jacob Trusty, "is certain, and yet it would sore puzzle and moyther my head to give good reason for thinking so. Thy great-grandfather and thy grandfather, William, always claimed that land, and thy father claimed it after them. But then the grandfather of this black-faced Watson likewise claimed it. Wherefore the difficulty was the same in those days. Ah! many a bloody head there hath been over that strip of meadow-land. For sixty years ago either Dale or Watson was

for ever driving cattle on it; and if it were a Dale, then a Watson came forth and drove them off; and if it were a Watson, he had to reckon with a Dale; and first there were words, and then there were blows, and then there was a stiff fight, and if there were no heads broken, 'twas not for want of hard hitting. Howbeit, in thy grandfather's time and in thy father's, matters have been quiet and peaceable."

"Shall we win the day, do you think, Jacob?" I asked.

"Nay, lad, who can tell? One thing I can tell thee without doubt, and that is, that the men who will profit by this matter are the lawyers. Whether thy father win or lose, or Rupert Watson lose or win, the lawyers will fill their pockets. Wherefore, William, boy, as thou goest through the world, mark one thing, namely, that whenever two men fall out, there will always be a third man whose interest it will be to keep up the

strife. For while John and Thomas are disputing as to which of them shall have the egg, Richard comes up and eats it out of hand. Such is law, out of which thou wilt do well to keep."

Nevertheless, it was necessary that my father should enjoy the services of an attorney, and he therefore placed his case in the hands of Lawyer Hook, who had managed all his difficult matters for many years. Mr. Hook was considerably exercised in his own mind over this dispute 'twixt the Dales and Watsons, for he could not lay his hands on anything which served to decide the matter in our favour. Neither was he able to see how judge and jury could settle the matter. "For indeed, Master Dale," said he, having ridden over one afternoon to talk with my father, "the evidence for and against is as conflicting as any I ever knew. You say on your side that your family hath always claimed the land, and you bring half

a score of ancient gaffers and gammers to say the same. Now, Rupert Watson saith that it hath always been matter of certainty in his family that the land is theirs, and he too bringeth various old folk to support him. However, we shall, maybe, find light somewhere. In any case, I fear it will cost you a pretty penny, and unless you have some great love for the land—'tis, I understand, but a narrow strip—I would let it go."

But my father would not hear of that. He had no mind to throw away his money in law, but he would not yield a yard of the land his fathers had left him. He must fight Rupert Watson on this point, whatever it cost.

A few nights after that we were sitting round the fire in my mother's parlour, and my father was telling us of some incident at the market, from which he had just come, when one of our maids came in and said that Jacob Trusty was in the kitchen, and wanted

to speak to the master. My father would have risen and gone to him, but just then Jacob himself appeared and stood within the doorway, having first pushed the girl out and closed the door.

"Master and mistress," said Jacob, "there are some things best said without hearers, so I make bold to come in here where are no lads and lasses to hear us, save only your own, which have a right to hear all."

"Sit down, Jacob," said my father. "Say thy say, man."

Jacob, however, remained standing, leaning on his thick staff. "Master," said he, "I have been thinking about this matter of the land. Also the other day Lawyer Hook met me on the turnpike, and asked me some questions, and I could see that he had little confidence. Now it came to me to ask you if there are no papers. Papers always go with land, so I've heard."

"Whatever I have, Jacob, are with Mr.

Hook," said my father. "And old as they are, they are no good on this point."

"That brings me to what I want to say," said Jacob. "I served your grandfather first when I was a lad ten years old. There were four of us, Tom Hodge, Anthony Boone, Dick Simpson, and myself, all slept in that chamber against the apple loft. There was an old chest in that chamber full of books and papers, and as never a one of us could read we used to wonder at them. Why not look in there, master?"

"The box is still there," said my mother.

"But the papers were taken out when I was a lad," said my father. "Mr. Hook has them now. However, 'tis good counsel, Jacob, and I'll look in the box again."

While Jacob went into the kitchen to drink a mug of ale, my father told me to get a candle and accompany him upstairs to the chamber mentioned, which was quite in accordance with my desires. So we ascended

to the chamber, which was in a remote corner of the house, and had long been given up to the storing away of ancient lumber. Thus there was in it old saddles of curious fashion, and rusty bits and stirrup-irons, together with quaintly carved chairs, broken and whole, and many other odds and ends accumulated in a house which has stood the brunt of some three hundred years. Amidst this mass of dust-covered lumber stood the oak chest spoken of by Jacob Trusty.

"It is empty, I fear, Will," said my father, pulling it into the middle of the floor; "but we will examine it to please old Jacob, who means well. Ah! you see there is nothing at all in it."

Nor was there, as far as we could see, for the interior was bare and empty, save for a thick coat of dust. I looked at the ancient chest curiously, holding the candle where the light would fall on its quaint carvings and the grotesque figures on the ends.

"My great-grandfather kept his papers and valuables in this chest, Will," said my father. "See, here are drawers to put money in. And there is a secret drawer. See if thou canst find it, lad."

But I could not, and did not make out where it was until my father drew out a drawer which had a false bottom, and this being removed, a small receptacle was laid bare.

"It is not very large," said my father, "but it sufficed to store anything especially worth the keeping."

Having admired the ingenious manner of the contrivance, I essayed to put the drawer in its place again, but found that it would not fit into the cavity prepared for it. Something seemed to lie in the way, and prevent the drawer from fitting properly. Putting my hand into the hole to discover the reason, my fingers encountered a thin packet of paper which I immediately drew

out and held up to my father's wondering gaze.

"What is this, lad?" said he. "Papers? They must have been placed in the secret drawer or behind it, and slipped underneath. 'Tis an ancient-looking packet, too."

That indeed it was, for the cover was yellow with age, and the handwriting upon it was of such an ancient fashion that neither my father nor myself could decipher it. So we carried it downstairs, and having called Jacob Trusty into the parlour to see what his counsel had procured for us, my mother took the packet to see what she could make out of it. Having stripped off the cover, she found some large papers with seals attached to them, but despite her clerkship she could make naught out of any of them, save that on the margin of one there was somewhat written which appeared to be of more recent date than the body of the writing. This, after some pains, she made

out to be as follows: "Ye cloase lying next to Wattson's land at Castle Hill ys myne by this deede. W.D. 1510." Which we took to show that one of our ancestors at least had something more than supposition to rest on when claiming the narrow strip of land. My father fastened up the papers again, and having charged us all to say nothing to any one about them, the next day he carried them over to Lawyer Hook, and told him how we had come across them. Lawyer Hook, after having with much labour read various of the papers, and particularly the one bearing the marginal note, was much pleased, and informed my father that we now had a perfect case, and should give Masters Watson and Sharpe such a surprise as they had not reckoned for.

"For this deed, Master Dale," said he, "proves that in the reign of Henry the Seventh the Watson of that day did sell to the then William Dale this bit of land in

exchange for three acres of land which had belonged to your yeomanry, but was somewhat inconvenient of access to you, but easily come at by him. So now rest content, Master Dale, and say naught to any one of this, and let Sharpe gather together what evidence he can, and when we are called on for our defence, we will produce our deed, and come away from the Assizes victorious."

So the time went by until December, and in the second week of that month the judges came to hold the Assize at York, and it was necessary for my father to attend. Now, he had made me a promise just before the dispute with Rupert Watson, that the next time business took him to York he would carry me with him, so that I might see the great city and its Minster. You may be sure that I neglected not to remind him of his promise, now that I knew he was bound to go to York. And though it yet wanted a fortnight of the holidays, he stood to his

word, and begged leave of Dr. Parsons to take me away from school earlier than usual, which leave the doctor granted when he heard whither we were bound.

On the 14th day of December, then, we set out for York, my father mounted on his brown mare and I riding Dumpling. We had but twenty-four miles to travel, and I was much set up at the prospect of riding along the Great North Road and forming one of the never-ceasing procession which was continually passing and repassing to or from London and York. So we said good-bye to my mother and Lucy and rode away, and having dined at Sherburn, which lies almost halfway between Dale's Field and York, we journeyed forward to the city in the afternoon, and arrived there long ere darkness had set in. As I had never seen York before, I was much impressed by my first sight of that fair and beautiful city, which lies like a jewel in the midst of the

rolling meadows and moors of Yorkshire, and I could do naught else but admire and wonder at its various sights. First, there was the Minster, which struck me with the most profound astonishment, being of such immensity in size and conception, that our church at home, though a fine one, seemed quite small in comparison. Then there were the city walls and the bars, through which we passed to enter the town, with their portcullises and guards and spikes over the towers, on which still stood the grisly heads of some that had been executed awhile before. And though the Minster seemed vast enough to hold all the people in the county, there were churches everywhere, some of them of exceeding great age. What with the Minster, and the churches, and the city walls, and the fine houses and people, I was thrown into a whirl of amazement, which did but increase the next day when Lawyer Hook conducted us to the Castle, where the Assizes were

opened, and it was necessary for us to attend. There did I first behold the majesty of the law, and saw a judge sitting on the bench in scarlet robes and ermine, with many lawyers before him arguing and disputing, and the twelve honest men in the jury-box wondering which was right and which wrong. Now, indeed, I need say little about our case, which was not called for some three days after we had reached York, there being many matters to deal with before we could be attended to. When it came on at last it was speedily over, for when Rupert Watson's side had put before judge and jury all they knew or could invent, our counsel produced the ancient deed, and the matter was settled, and the land ours for ever without dispute. And the judge having said some sharp words about hastily rushing into litigation, ordered Rupert Watson to pay all the costs we had been put to, the business was over, and we were free to go where we pleased. I could

have well done to stay awhile in York and see more of the city at my leisure, but my father was anxious to reach home and tell my mother of our success. So having dined at our inn and paid the score for ourselves and our beasts, we mounted the latter and set out homewards, well pleased with the result of our journey.

It was well on into the afternoon when we left York, and having paused awhile at Sherburn to give the horses a feed, the darkness came on suddenly and speedily surrounded us. This by itself was no great matter, for the brown mare and Dumpling could both have taken their way homeward blindfold. But as Providence ruled it, there came upon us a heavy snowstorm as we descended the hill from Byram into Ferrybridge, and this confused our cattle, so that progress was slow, Dumpling in particular objecting to the snow, which drove right against us as we pressed along and made our faces tingle with

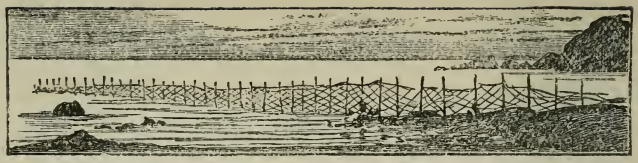
its sharpness. However, we gained Ferrybridge, and after a short stay there entered upon the last three miles of our journey, it being then eight o'clock in the evening and the snow coming down faster than ever.

Now the road 'twixt Ferrybridge and Darrington is a lonely one, and never over pleasant to ride along at any time of night. There were no carriages or coaches going along on this night, and we met nothing but a post-chaise going north. The snow increased at every step, and the beasts beneath us groaned with their efforts to keep their footing and persevere on their homeward way.

"'Tis a wild night, Will," said my father, who rode on my right hand; "and thy mother will be anxious for us. We shall be home in half an hour an' we keep at it. Shake Dumpling up, lad; she is half-afraid of the snow, and will——"

I never knew what more my father would

have said. As he spoke, a figure seemed to rise up out of the storm right in our path. I heard a sharp report of firearms and saw the flash. My father fell from his horse without even a groan.



CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE SORROW THAT CAME AFTER.

I WAS too much horrified by the sudden attack upon my father to cry out or even to move. I sat for what seemed an age without even drawing my breath. Dumpling quivered beneath me; I heard the mare shaking at her side. It seemed to me like some awful dream, from which I should presently awake to find myself in my little sleeping-chamber at Dale's Field. And then I suddenly realized the horror that had come to overwhelm me and mine, and my heart seemed to burst into one terrible cry.

"Father, oh, father!"

Alas! there was no response. Trembling with fear I got down from Dumpling's back and felt my way through the darkness to the mare's bridle. She was shivering and quaking all over, and pushed her nose against my arm as if to ask protection. I fastened her by the bridle to Dumpling and bade them stand still. Poor brutes, what with the storm and the sudden attack they were thoroughly cowed and affrighted, and they huddled together and held their heads to the ground, as beasts only will when they are completely yielded up to fear. And then I began to search about in the snow, and presently stumbled over my father's body.

He was dead—I knew that as soon as I touched him. I knew it by the awful stillness that lay over him, by the perfectly rigid manner in which his tall form was extended on the snow. I laid my hands on him, on his face, breast, arms, and suddenly felt them bathed in something that ran fast

and warm from his heart. And the touch of his blood overwhelmed me, and thinking of my mother waiting for us at home, and of Lucy and myself without a father, I broke down and threw my arms about him, and sobbed like any girl, while the poor beasts at my side sniffed at me and seemed to sorrow with my sorrow.

And then all of a sudden I sprang to my feet with a mad fierce thought newborn in my heart. My father had been murdered! This was no ordinary highway affair, no stoppage of unoffending travellers by highwayman or footpad. The man who had come upon us out of the darkness had discharged his deadly missive and fled away as swiftly as he came. He had not waited to rob and plunder, as he might well have done for aught that I, a lad, could have done to prevent him. It was no murder for the sake of spoil, but committed out of hatred and envy. And in all the world my father

had but one enemy, and that was Rupert Watson. It must have been his hand that had shot my father down; it could be none but his. And with this conviction strong in mind I knelt down in the snow and laid my hand on my dead father's breast again, and swore solemnly never to rest until I had brought his murderer to a fitting end.

When I looked up again, perplexed as to what I must do next, I saw a light drawing near along the road from Ferrybridge. From the way in which it danced up and down in the darkness I took it to be carried by a horseman. I raised my voice and shouted loudly through the storm, and presently two men, cloaked to the chin, came cautiously up and turned the light upon me as I stood in the way, with the still figure behind me and the horses smelling at it in fear and wonder.

"God's mercy!" said one, "what is this? Here seems foul work."

They were looking past me at the group behind.

"Sir," I cried, "my father is dead—murdered! We were coming home from York—a man rode up to us here—he fired—my father fell—he is dead, dead!"

Before I had finished they were off their horses, and one was kneeling in the snow at my father's side. The other turned the lantern's light upon his dead face. I turned away; it was more than I could bear, to see that.

"He is dead," said the first. "He has been shot through the heart. A foul business. Somehow, methinks I know him."

"It is William Dale," I said. "William Dale of Dale's Field."

"And thou art my little friend Will," said he, rising from his knees. "I thought I knew thee, poor Will. What, dost not remember me?"

Then I looked at him and saw that it was

Philip Lisle. He laid his hand on my head, and patted it affectionately.

"Poor lad, poor lad!" said he. "I would we could have had a merrier meeting. This man, Will, where went he after he had fired upon thy father?"

"I cannot say," I answered. "He seemed to ride upon us all in a moment, and I saw his pistol flash, and by the light of it he was a tall man on a great horse, but he was gone as quick as the flash when it was over."

"What! stayed he not to rob? Then, Will, this is no common murder. Thy father, had he any enemies?"

"Yes, sir, one, and one only—Rupert Watson, of Castle Hill."

"Ah! I have heard somewhat of that old dispute. Lad, doubt not that whoever hath killed thy father will be punished in the end. And now let us see how we can get him home. Where is the nearest house?"

"There is a farmstead across the fields," I answered. "We can get a cart there."

"Then go there with me, Will, and my friend Captain Ready here will keep watch over thy father till we return. Stay, let us lift him to the hedge-side. Steady, Jack, thou and I have strong arms. Poor William Dale, 'tis a sad end for him, but I had rather be he than his slayer. And now for this farmstead."

So we ploughed our way across the field, leaving Philip Lisle's companion watching by my father, and after some difficulty we procured a cart, and a man to drive it, and returned, and the men lifted the body in, and we set off along the turnpike in the direction of Dale's Field, I riding Dumpling and leading the mare by the bridle. At first as we went along Philip Lisle and Captain Ready conversed in low whispers, but presently the former came over to me and laid his hand on my arm.

"Will," said Philip Lisle, "some one must needs ride forward and break this bad news to thy poor mother. What think you, Will, shall we leave him with Ready and ride onward? It will be well for her to have thee at hand when she hears this sad matter."

So we rode forward through the falling snow, and the cart came rumbling after us with Captain Ready riding at the side. And as we rode along I could say nothing at all. I knew naught, and saw naught. Only there was a mist of red all about me and a fierce, burning desire to lay hands upon the murderer who had robbed me of a father and my mother of her husband. It was late when we reached the open gate at Dale's Field and rode through it into the fold. They heard our horses' feet in the house; the door opened, warmth and light came through it from the cheery kitchen. I saw my mother standing in the open doorway to welcome us, and Lucy peeped out from

behind her gown, and beyond them was Jacob Trusty holding a mug of ale in his hand. And at the sight of the old familiar place the tears came rolling fast and hot and very bitter from my eyes.

"Be brave, Will," whispered Philip Lisle. "Be brave, lad. Remember thy mother and be a man."

We advanced into the light. My mother came a step forward to meet us with a cry of joy at our return. And then she suddenly stopped, for she caught sight of Philip Lisle's face where she had expected to see her husband's. And at that I could bear it no longer, but ran forward and threw my arms about her, and burst into such tears as I had never shed before and have never shed since.

"Will!" she said. "Will! what is it, my dear? Your father?"

"Oh, mother, mother, mother!" was all I could say.

I felt her arms suddenly tighten about me, and I knew she was looking at Philip Lisle.

"Madam," said Philip Lisle. "Madam—"

"Speak out, sir," she said, "there is some evil happened. Tell me all, I pray you."

"God in Heaven knows, madam," said he, "I would have suffered aught rather than bring you this news. I pray you be brave to endure it."

"I am brave, sir," she answered. "Tell me it all. My husband—is he dead?"

But Philip Lisle could say no more. He bowed his head and turned away to hide his own emotion.

My mother took the fearful blow bravely. She went indoors and sat down, still holding me in her arms and striving to comfort me. Never to the day of my death shall I forget that scene. My mother sat by the fire, and I leaned my head against her, striving to keep down the great sobs that seemed like to choke me, and Lucy had stolen up and

was weeping softly at my mother's side, and before us at the table stood Jacob Trusty, still holding his mug of ale, and one of the maids stood behind him, and the doorway into the back kitchen was filled with the scared faces of the ploughmen and boys, and through the door into the parlour I could see the table set with prodigal fulness in anticipation of our return. And in the middle of the kitchen stood Philip Lisle, his long black cloak spangled with snowflakes.

At last my mother raised her head and looked at him. "Tell me how it came about," she said, in a calm, steady voice that frightened me, because it seemed so unnatural at that time. "Tell me, sir."

But Philip Lisle shook his head and pointed to me. "Your son, madam, can best do that. Take him inside and let him tell you his news, and suffer me to make some preparations, for they are bringing Master Dale here and will soon arrive."

And so we went into the parlour, and as soon as I could I told my mother all the sad story. And yet she could not weep, but held my hands between her own, and sometimes they gripped mine tightly, and sometimes they were hot and then cold, and there was a look came into her eyes and in her face which I had never seen there before. But soon they called for her instructions, and she had to go about and give orders, and presently came Captain Ready with the cart, and they carried my father across his own threshold, and—— But of that night I will write no more.

When it was noised abroad the next day that William Dale had been foully murdered on the highway between Ferrybridge and Darrington, there was such a commotion in the neighbourhood as no one ever remembered. Philip Lisle and his friend Ready had remained at the inn at Darrington, and they were questioned on all sides.

As for our house, it was besieged all day, for my mother's friends came from neighbouring villages, and men on horseback rode up to inquire if the bad news were true, and Parson Drumbleforth walked over early in the morning to comfort my mother. I think that all of us would have been happier if my mother had broken down and wept, but she maintained a calm spirit; only those who knew could see from her white face and fixed eyes that she was suffering more than any one could imagine. Nevertheless, she kept her sorrow down, and comforted me and Lucy, and made arrangements for the burying of my father's body, and did things so thoroughly that all admired her bravery.

"Nevertheless, lad," said Jacob Trusty, who was talking with me on the second day, "I like not to see it, for 'tis not natural. If she would cry now, it would be a comfort and a thing to praise God for. I pray she may break down when they take him away. For

it is a bad thing, William, boy, to keep one's grief bottled up as it were. 'Tis like a dove which you may prison in a cage, and which will make no murmur, but will die silently. Howbeit, she will feel it badly when they fasten him up for burial."

Jacob had felt my father's death very keenly. When I could bear it he had taken me on one side and asked me the manner of it, and I had told him all I could think of. Jacob's face grew grave and thoughtful as he listened, and he shook his head often.

"What do you think of it, Jacob?" I said at last.

"Nay, lad, nay, what can I think? Thy father had but one enemy in all the world. See how befriended he was! Have they not been here this past two days, gentle and simple, high and low, so that the door-step hath never cooled of them? Hast hearkened how they praised him, how all had a good word for him? Nay, weep not,

William, lad. Be proud that all men thought so well of thy poor father. But, William, one man hath not come, and only one of all the neighbourhood."

"You mean Rupert Watson?"

Jacob nodded his gray head. "Ay," said he, "him I do mean. Certainly, seeing that they had never been friends, and had lately had extra cause of unpleasantness, it might seem strange to some if Rupert Watson had come here. But I can remember that when thy grandfather died this Watson's father was bidden to the funeral and came like a Christian. But this one stays aside, and hath never sent word of sympathy."

"Jacob," I said, "do you think it was Rupert Watson who did it?"

"I know not, lad, I know not. Let it be."

"Nay," I said, "that I will not. If he killed my father I will fasten it on him and kill him."

"Whisht, lad, whisht!" said Jacob Trusty. "Thou art too young to talk of killing. Rest assured that whoever killed thy father will be sorry enow for it. For there was never crime done in this world, lad, that did not come home to the doer. It may be long first, but come it will."

I had to tell all I knew about the manner of my father's death to the coroner and his jury, and they examined me at great length, and with me Philip Lisle and his friend Captain Ready. But there was nothing in our testimony that was clear, and they gave in a verdict that my father was murdered by some unknown person, and there was an end of it. And two days after that we buried him in the churchyard at Darrington, and there was such a throng of folk as I had never seen before, people coming from far and near to pay their respects to his memory. And Lucy and I went and followed after the coffin, and the people said kind things to us,

but my mother stayed at home. Ah me! without him the house seemed shorn of all its light and life, and when we came back from the funeral and I realized that I never should again see him or hear him, never again touch his hand, or learn from him, I broke down utterly, and went to my mother's side and laid my head on her knee and wept my heart out. And presently I felt her hot tears drop on my face, and so at last she wept and relieved her heart and was somewhat comforted.

Now, after my father had been buried, men began to talk of the manner of his death and to ask questions and give opinions. And knowing that he had but one enemy, and that enemy a man over whom he had just achieved a triumph, there were not wanting those who hinted in broad fashion that it was Rupert Watson who had slain my father, out of hatred and revenge. And little by little men began to look darkly

upon him when they met him in high-road or market-place, and some would hardly speak to him, and even his associates looked fearfully at him. So patent did these things become that he could not fail to notice them, for indeed people began to shun him as they would the plague.

But Rupert Watson was not the man to patiently suffer this, and setting us down as the originators of the feeling against him, he rode over one afternoon and drew rein at our door, and knocked thereon. And my mother having caught sight of him went out herself, and I followed, my heart beating against my ribs until it was like to burst.

"How now, dame!" said he, looking angry and black at us, "what is this that you are saying of me? Think you I have naught to do but slay men o' nights? I would have you know that there is law for those that set malicious reports abroad."

Then my mother looked straight at him.

"Master Watson," she said, "I have set no reports abroad, nor shall I. I know not who killed my dear husband. But I am very sure, Master Watson, that not all the sorrow and pain which I and these children have suffered will equal one tithe of the sorrow that God will bring down on the head of his murderer."

And therewith she went inside and closed the door, and Rupert Watson rode out of the yard with his head bent down, looking, said one of our maids, as if he had seen a spirit.

CHAPTER IX.

OF THE PASSAGE OF MANY YEARS.

AFTER that time many years came and went and brought nothing of moment with them. It seemed indeed to me that however the great world's affairs might go, naught disturbed us at Dale's Field, where the seasons travelled round with monotonous regularity. Now it was winter and now spring, and with the latter came fresh flowers and the bleating of lambs, and summer followed only to be driven forth by apple-cheeked autumn, and so the year completed its cycle and was in its turn compelled to give way to its successor. For I perceived

at last that I was grown head and shoulders above my mother, who herself was a tall woman, and I was not a little proud to feel that I was approaching manhood.

I had pleaded hard after my father's sudden death to be allowed to remain at home and help my mother in managing the farm, for I knew that she would need a helping hand and head where there was so much to do. There would, I foresaw, be many an occasion when she would need some one to carry messages and ride forth on business, and it seemed to me that I was the one to undertake such affairs. And for a time my mother, feeling the loneliness of her position, was minded to keep me at home to help her. But having taken counsel, as was her wont upon all important matters, with Parson Drumbleforth, she considered it best that I should go back to Dr. Parsons for a twelvemonth at least.

"Thou wilt do thy poor mother most good, Will," said Parson Drumbleforth, "by going back to thy book and attending thereto. As to farm matters, she hath Jacob Trusty to assist her, and a wiser man in husbandry I know not. Go back then, lad, to my good friend Doctor Parsons, and mind thy book for the space of a year, and get some strength into those great bones of thine against the time when thou wilt be master of Dale's Field."

And with that I was fain to be content, and returned to school, determined to do my duty there until such times as I was called to do it elsewhere. Yet I cared little about book-learning, for my head was always running after what things were going on at Dale's Field, and I fear that my mind was often with Jacob Trusty and Timothy Grass when it ought to have been immersed in far diverse matters. It was, for example, a hard thing to sit in the ancient school-

house on a fine spring morning, staring at the grammar and remembering that at that very moment Jacob Trusty was probably counting the young lambs in the home meadow. At such times I used to wish that I could jump across the country and join Jacob for an hour, so inviting was the thought of the green fields and bright sunshine. However, I had a good deal of consolation in the weekly home-going, for I ran off homewards as soon as school was over on Friday, and did not return until Monday. By my mother's pleasure I was often accompanied on these week-end visits by one or other of my fellows, Ben Tuckett, or Tom Thorpe, and on the Saturday we were as often as not joined by Jack Drumbleforth, with whom we had many a royal day at birds'-nesting, so that the country round there became as familiar to us as the lines on our hands. And once or twice at holiday times I had all three lads

to stay with me at Dale's Field, and our merrymaking was great.

So the time went on and I was growing every month and assuming vast proportions, so that people who knew me not stared in astonishment on learning my age, and thought me older than I was. For at my fifteenth year I was nearly six feet high and well-fashioned into the bargain, being broad-shouldered and properly proportioned, and having nothing of the beanstalk about me as so many fast-growing lads have. Moreover, I was developing considerable strength and could lift and carry a load of wheat or potatoes as easily as if it were a pike-staff. But Jacob Trusty would not allow me to do much in that way.

"Husband thy strength, William," he was wont to say, "husband thy strength. For what good will it do thee to show folk how strong thou art now? 'Tis a fine sight, doubtless, to see so young a lad possess the

strength of a grown man, but such things are, after all, but in the way of sight-seeing and afford only a passing curiosity. Keep thy strength, lad, for thy manhood, for thou mayst find a time of blows, and worse, coming."

Now when I was fifteen I told my mother with all respect that I thought it time I was busied about the farm and learning the active duties of life. And in this view I was supported by Dr. Parsons, who drove over to Dale's Field one day during the holidays in order to talk with my mother about me. I can see him now as he sat in my mother's parlour, a little round figure in sober black, with a bald head and gold spectacles, over which he would occasionally blink at me, as if wondering at my great height and breadth.

"Mistress Dale," said the Doctor, "as for your great lad here, I fear he must leave me. For look you, he is a man already

in size, a regular Anak, and towers head and shoulders above his fellows."

"As he does above me, sir," said my mother, with a smile.

"Yea, and above me, his master. Well, dame, but the lad's heart is always with ye here, and his head is always running on sheep and cattle, turnip and wheat, sowing and reaping. And so now, having made him into a fair scholar, let him set to and make a better farmer."

"I trust he has done his duty, sir?" said my mother.

"He hath been a good lad, mistress, a good lad indeed. For if he hath been slow he hath made sure, which is high praise. Yea, I am well enough pleased with thee, Will, and wish thee well."

And so I was fairly entered upon my life's business, which, as I understood it, was to do my duty to the land which my fathers had left me and hand it forward to my

successors even better than when I found it. I need not tell you that I entered into my new mode of life with great eagerness. A proud lad I was when my mother bought me a new horse whereon to ride about the farm, and fitted me up in addition with a new saddle and bridle. My old schoolmates envied me not a little when they saw my new state. They, too, were leaving school and going into the world, but none of them were thrown into such pleasant occupation as mine. I at least thought so, and so I believe did they. For Jack Drumbleforth was going to Oxford, so that he might in time become a parson, and Tom Thorpe had been articled to Mr. Hook the lawyer, and would henceforth have to live amongst the parchment and ink, while poor Ben Tuckett, meeting the worst fate of all, was apprenticed to a grocer of Pontefract and liked the prospect ill.

"You are the one to be envied, Will,"

said Jack Drumbleforth, "for you will be able to breathe fresh air every minute of the day if you are so minded, while I am poring over old books and while Tom is hunting ancient parchments and poor Ben is frying in the grocer's shop. However, lads, 'tis all in a life and will be all the same a hundred years hence. I dare say we shall all meet again sooner or later."

But with Jack Drumbleforth we did not meet often during the next few years, for he presently went away to Oxford and was entered at one of the Colleges, and only came home to see his father once a year in the summer time. But Tom Thorpe and Ben Tuckett used to come to Dale's Field often, for they were both apprenticed in Pontefract, and it was a pleasant walk across the meadows, so that they both took to coming every Sunday, and we made them heartily welcome and looked for them as a regular thing. And in the summer, when

Jack Drumbleforth was at home, we had some gay meetings, for Jack was always full of life and suffered no one to be dull in his presence. He would come and stay all day in our harvest field, eating and drinking with me and the men, and making merry with all until the sun set. And we always held our harvest-home supper before the time came for Jack to go back to his College, for he professed that he lived upon the remembrance of it for all the succeeding winter.

So the years went on, quietly and uneventfully for us at Dale's Field. Time had somewhat healed our great sorrow, though it could never wholly destroy it. My mother had grown resigned, even happy again, and she took great pride in her children. Lucy was growing a fine girl by that time, and was a great help in the house, for she seemed to possess my mother's clever ways, and was an adept at all domestic matters of preserving and baking and cooking and so

forth. She was growing up not unlike my mother, that is to say, she was a tall, well-made girl with pleasant features and kind eyes and brown hair, which I believe Master Ben Tuckett learnt to admire even in our school days. For Lucy was Ben's goddess, and he would fetch and carry for her like any dog. Nay, it dawned upon me as time went on that Ben had fallen in love with Lucy, such signs did he sometimes show of it. And I minded not, for I loved them both, and Ben was a good fellow. But I said naught of it even to my mother, being minded to let matters take their course.

In the year in which I came of age our harvest was an uncommonly favourable one. We had warm and nourishing rains in spring and abundant sunshine afterwards, and the corn had sprung and shot and ripened and was ready for the scythe by the end of July. And for many a week after that we had

favourable weather, for day after day dawned bright and hot, and our men were in the fields early and late, cutting the grain with scythe and sickle, and binding and setting up the sheaves in long rows across the stubble. We had not, I think, a shower of rain during all that time of ingathering, and we were pleased and thankful that we should have such a favourable harvest. We were a little over a month in reaping and housing our crops, and it was getting near to my birthday in the second week of August, when our last field was ready to be cleared. So it seemed good to my mother that we should hold a merrymaking in honour of my coming to man's estate at the same time as we held our harvest-home.

"For it will all be one trouble and one preparation, Will," she said, "and we shall have but one asking of our guests. Yet we must have some extra merrymaking at a time like this, when you are going to enter

into man's estate and your own land at the same time."

"Nay, mother," said I, "what do I want more than to serve you?"

For, indeed, I cared not about their legal formalities, which would transfer the broad acres of Dale's Field to me from those who had held them in trust. So long as they were ours and we were living upon them, I cared for nothing more.

"Nay," said she, "my son must enter into his father's possessions. Ah, Will, thou art so like thy father now. I think I see him in thee, just as he was two and twenty years ago. Well, but what shall we do at this feast, Will?"

"Nay," said I, "I am no hand at that sort of thing, mother. Let us consult Jack Drumbleforth. He will know what we should do and tell us how to do it."

And I went out and found Jack in our stackyard, where he was talking with Jacob

Trusty, and carried him into the great kitchen, where my mother and Lucy were making fruit pies, and there we explained to Jack what it was we wished to do.

"Why," said he, "what you want first of all, Mistress Dale, is to fill your larder with provisions. I warrant that everybody will be hungry and thirsty at a time like that."

"If that be all," said my mother, "nobody shall have cause to go away sorrowful."

"Well, 'tis not all, but 'tis a great deal. What say you, now, if you have a great feast in the big barn? Or, come, 'tis fine weather, why not have it on the lawn outside here, and a dance to follow? You will ask all your friends, Will, and indeed make everybody who likes to come welcome."

"Any one shall be welcome who comes that day," said my mother.

"We will have great things," said Jack, rubbing his hands. "See to it that there is

plenty to eat and drink, Mistress Dale, and I will do the rest. Come thou with me, Will, and we will talk matters over with Jacob Trusty."

CHAPTER X.

OF MY COMING OF AGE.

DURING the next few days Jack Drumbleforth was in his element. Naught pleased him so well as to be manager of a feast or entertainment, and he found vast delight in making plans how this or that should be done, and in what order the guests should sit, and so with a multitude of matters which would have caused me a great deal of discomfort. I was well pleased to have Jack close at hand at this time, for he took the weight off my shoulders and left me free, which was what I wanted.

The final arrangement come to between

Jack and my mother, with Lucy thrown in as counsellor, was that we should have two entertainments, the first for the labourers and their wives and children, the second for our friends and acquaintance, and such of our own quality as might drop in upon us. This we thought to be better than entertaining all together, as it left us free to pay more attention to our guests than if they had all come upon one day. Again, said Jack, the men would feel more at home amongst themselves, and would cut their jokes and amuse themselves better than in the presence of their masters. So we fixed the entertainment for the labourers on the 24th of August, that being my birthday, and for our other friends on the 25th. These things being settled, my mother and Lucy set to work with a right good will, and very soon our larder began to look as if we were threatened with a siege. I was at that time always blessed with a good appetite—indeed,

I thank God, I always have been—and it used to whet it to look through the latticed window and see the good things which their nimble fingers had shaped in honour of the coming feast. I used to call Jack Drumbleforth, and bade him peep through the lattices too, at which Jack's mouth would water, for he, too, was endowed with a healthy appetite, so that we were often forced to cut ourselves a great slice of cold pie, and wash it down with a quart of ale out of sympathy. Nor did we ever find that these slight refreshments interfered with our meals, though I have heard people say that to eat between breakfast and dinner is to spoil the latter.

It was no slight trouble to invite the guests to our entertainment, for my mother was anxious that all our acquaintance should come, and as many of them were hard to get at, I had no little riding about to do before I had got them all invited. As for the labourers, we decided that all who had

ever done a day's work for us at odd times should come, with their wives and families, and that all our present hands should have the privilege of asking a friend. In this way there was a goodly assemblage gathered together in our great barn when the day came. The barn, thanks to Jack Drumbleforth, had been very gaily decorated with boughs and flowers, and looked quite inviting as one entered it from the stackyard. My mother, indeed, said that she had never seen a prettier sight than it presented when all the company were met, and Parson Drumbleforth rose up to say grace before meat.

And indeed, a pleasant sight it was, and one that did my heart good to see. For right down the centre of the barn ran a long table, which the carpenter had fixed up that morning, with benches on either side that would seat each over fifty persons. The walls were gaily spread with fresh-plucked boughs, and Lucy had ornamented the table

with bunches of flowers, so that there was green, and red, and white, and blue everywhere. But if the flowers on the table looked well, what shall I say of all the goodly dishes that almost hid the snow-white cloth from sight? My mother, like all good housewives, loved hospitality, and nothing would satisfy her but that she must put before her guests all that she could devise or our larder command. I do not think that the daintiest epicure could have found fault with our table that night, for if the fare was homely, it was well cooked and pleasantly served, which is no small matter. As for the beef, it was of Jacob Trusty's own feeding, and so was the bacon, and our people seemed to think that there was additional recommendation in that. At any rate, they praised both by sending up their plates time and again, and the carvers had a merry time of it, and so had Jack Drumbleforth, whose office it was to preside at the great barrel

of ale that had been placed in the coolest corner of the barn. Everybody, indeed, was at his or her busiest attending to the wants of our guests, and my mother's face beamed with satisfaction as she watched the men and their wives and children enjoying their entertainment.

Though I had somewhat hung back from it, being always loth to put myself forward, they had forced me, saying it was the proper thing, to take the chair at the head of the long table, and preside over this great feast. So there I sat in my best, feeling as if every eye was fixed upon me, and yet very proud withal of the honour, and Jacob Trusty and Timothy Grass, being our oldest men, sat one on either side of me, while Parson Drumbleforth sat at the foot of the table as vice-chairman. While the supper was being discussed, every man was too busily engaged to think of aught else; but when all had eaten their fill, and their minds had a chance,

certain of the older men began to look at Jacob Trusty and cough in a significant manner, so that I immediately grew very hot about the ears, knowing right well that they wanted Jacob to propose my health, which would oblige me to make a speech in reply. For a time, however, Jacob Trusty did not choose to take the hint. Perhaps he was already composing his speech in his own mind, or waiting for an idea to come to him. However, the silence and the expectant looks continuing, Timothy Grass thought it well to call Jacob's attention to the matter.

"I think, Jacob," said Timothy Grass, "I think the folks expect a word or two from you, it being a great occasion, and you the oldest man present. So up, Jacob, and let us hear what hast got to say, man."

I think that Jacob was secretly pleased with his mission, and felt his own importance in the matter, though, like other greater

men, he pretended that he rose with diffidence, and was unprepared to sustain so difficult a part. Jack Drumbleforth, too, said that he was minded to believe that Jacob had been committing his little speech to memory, and practising it in spare moments; but I paid no heed to Jack, knowing of old that Jacob was a ready talker, and never fast for words. However, I question whether Jacob ever had so large an audience, or such an attentive one as upon that occasion, for every eye was turned upon him, and the youngest stable-boy ran outside into the fold to drive away the hens which were cackling and clucking without the barn-door.

"Master William, and friends all," said Jacob, when he had fairly gotten upon his legs, and Parson Drumbleforth had rapped loudly upon the table to command attention —"Master William, and friends all, this is a great occasion, and has been honoured

accordingly. I thank God that I have lived to see it, to see the lad grow into a man. And such a man! Friends, I have seen three generations of Dales, and they have all been big men; but this is bigger all ways, length and breadth, wherefore, I say, I am glad, because the old stock is as fine as ever. Now, there's some among you who can remember Master William being born, and how he grew up to a lad, and you've seen him change from a lad to a man. All that I've seen too, perhaps a bit closer than most of you, because he's been mine from the very first, and he'll not deny it. Who showed him his first bird's-nest but Jacob Trusty? Who made him his first whip, or gave him his first ride a-horseback, but me? I ha' done a deal for him, child and boy, and I feel a sort o' right in him. Well, friends all, Master William has come to manhood at last, and here he sits amongst us, master of the good old acres on which you and me

have toiled. Here he sits for all to look at and admire—a fine, big man, like his fathers, six foot four in his stockings, and strong as a bull. And so, friends, having seen him grow up to manhood, I have seen all I wished for, and can die happy. 'Tis but a poor way of saying it, but Master William knows how old Jacob loves him and the old place. So now, friends, young and old, fill your glasses. Fill 'em up, and drink 'em off to the health and long life of William Dale."

I can see him now as he stood there, tall, erect, silver-haired, in his clean smock and gay neckerchief, his old weather-beaten, wrinkled face shining with good humour, and a tear in his bright blue eye as he lifted his glass to drink my health. I can feel the clasp of his hard, horny hand as he grasped mine and said, "God bless thee, William, lad, God bless thee!" No heartier or truer hand-clasp ever met mine than that, for no man ever loved me more than Jacob Trusty.

There was quite a storm of shouting and cheering when Jacob had done, and I was outfaced with the warmth of the reception given to me. Then came Jack Drumbleforth to the back of my chair, whispering me to rise and speak while the iron was hot, and then I found myself on my legs, staring at the eager faces before me, and wondering what I was going to say. As to what I did say I cannot tell, though I can remember everything that old Jacob said. But I spoke from my heart, and thanked them for their kindly feeling to me and mine, and promised to be a good master to all who worked, and should work for me, and swore that no man who ever tilled my land should want food or shelter if any evil day fell upon him and his, which vow I have faithfully kept to this present. And after that there were more healths drunk, and Parson Drumbleforth made us a serious speech, after which his son Jack made us a merry one, whereat every-

body laughed heartily. And then the whole company adjourned into the orchard, where the elder people sat about under the trees, and the children played at various sports, devised by Ben Tuckett and my sister Lucy, and everything went as merry as a marriage bell. As for Jack Drumbleforth he was here, there, and everywhere, superintending this, and arranging that, while his father and my mother and I walked about from group to group, saying a word to every one, and bidding all hearty welcome to Dale's Field. When all were tired of further merrymaking there was more ale and refreshment served out, and then I stood at the orchard gate and shook hands with all as they went homeward, receiving their blessings as they passed away.

"Odd's fish!" said Jack Drumbleforth, when the last was gone; "I am as dry as if I had sat before a lime-kiln this five hours. It is hard work this merrymaking, after all,

Will. However, what matters a dry throat and tired legs, if other folk are pleased? Thy guests—I think they all enjoyed their entertainment, Will?"

"That indeed they did, Jack, thanks to you."

"Nay, man, no thanks to me. But I am so hungry that I must inside and persuade Lucy to give me a cut of game pie and a pint of ale. 'Tis supper-time already. Come in, Will, and join me."

But I was in no humour for it just then. My head was all in a whirl with the events of the evening, and I was anxious to take a quiet walk round my meadows in the moonlight to get the heat and noise out of my brain. Already through the lighted window I could see my mother and Lucy and Ben Tuckett and Parson Drumbleforth gathering round the supper-table, well pleased with the day's proceedings. I bade Jack go in and join them.

"I am going for a walk round the meadow, Jack," I said. "Tell them I will come in presently when my head cools. The noise rings in it yet."

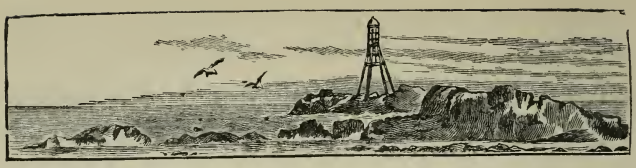
So I went away through the orchard into the home meadows and wandered, thinking of many things, across the dewy grass in the direction of the woods. The harvest-moon was at its full, and the air was soft and warm. From the road beyond Dale's Field came the sound of a post-chaise driven rapidly onward by the hurrying post-boy. The sound of the wheels died away as I walked across the shining grass; and then the silence was complete. I lifted my hat and let the cool air sweep over my forehead. I thought of what good old Jacob had said, and of the hearty expressions of good-will which had come to me on every side. These thoughts were serious and weighty, and made me think much of my new responsibilities. For I was now Dale of Dale's

Field, and the broad acres around me were mine.

I was in no hurry to turn homewards, and half-unconsciously I passed into the wood and went down the path that led to the mill by the river-side. The wheel was turning slowly and the spray darted like silver in the moonlight. I stood in the lane and watched it for a while, and then I turned down towards Wentbridge, thinking to reach home by the road. I remembered that I must say good night to Parson Drumbleforth and Jack before they drove homewards, and I hurried my steps, chiding myself that my thoughts had carried me so far afield. But as I reached the foot of the lane and was turning up the hill I came upon two figures in the moonlight, at sight of whom I stopped. A man, on horseback, evidently booted and spurred for a journey, sat bending down to speak to a female whose hand lay on his horse's bridle. At sound of my foot the

man looked up. I could not see his face, but the moon shone full on my own. He raised his hand.

"Ah!" said he, "an that is not Will Dale, I am dreaming! Will, is it not you? It is years since we met, lad, and 'twas a sad time; but, why, it is I, Philip Lisle, Will, and here is Rose—thou wilt remember Rose, though she is no longer a little maiden, but grown almost a woman."



CHAPTER XI.

OF MY SECOND MEETING WITH ROSE LISLE.

NOW it seemed to me when I heard Philip Lisle's voice, that I was walking in a dream from which I should presently wake to find myself elsewhere, so strange was it to meet with him and Rose standing almost where I had left them so many years before. Yet the strange thrill of pleasure which shot through my heart was no dream, and the clasp of Black Phil's hand was warm and real as he bent from his saddle to greet me.

"Ha!" said he, "I am glad to meet thee, Will Dale. Rose, give Will thy hand.

How many years ago is it, I wonder, since thou and he rode together down yonder bank on horse Cæsar's back ? Ye have both grown somewhat since then, and I have grown older and greyer."

Rose stretched out her hand to me and looked curiously at me in the moonlight. She must indeed have wondered to find the lad she remembered grown into such a strapping man as I was then. Yet she could not be more surprised than I was when I came to look at her in the full light of the moon. She had grown into a tall and stately maiden of gracious presence and rare beauty, in which I could still trace some resemblance to the child that had bent over me in the wood when I fell down from the storm-cock's nest. Now I had never until then looked much upon maidens, always having my mind intent on other matters, but I felt that having once seen Rose Lisle I could go on watching her dark eyes for ever.

So we stood looking at each other in the moonlight, each no doubt wondering by what magic means time had so soon wrought this great change in us.

"Well," said Philip Lisle, "and how goes the world with you, Will? I have never ridden this way since that sad night many a year ago, and I dare say ye have all well-nigh forgotten me."

"That, indeed, we have not, sir. We have thought often of you and of Mistress Rose here, and wondered why you brought her not to see us as you promised."

"Ah, lad, I have had much to do. My time has been spent far north, Carlisle way, this ten years. For dost know, Will, I had given up my old trade when I found thee kneeling by thy poor father's body that night. I have been a King's man since then, nay, I was even then upon the King's business. Rose and I have had a quiet billet in Carlisle this many years."

I was glad to hear that and said so.

"But who knows, lad, how much longer it may be quiet? There is trouble afoot. You have heard of it, Will?"

"We have heard such news as travellers bring," I answered.

"There is war at hand, Will," said he. "War and no less. You have heard that the King and Commons are at daggers drawn. I fear it will be a great struggle, of which no man can yet see the end."

Now in our parts we knew very little of the discussion between the King and the Parliament, for news travelled slowly, and we had enough to do to look after our own concerns without troubling about those of our betters. Nevertheless, so unsettled had been the times during the past ten years that people had talked more than usual about the doings of those in high places, and we were thus somewhat familiar with certain great events which had lately happened.

We had heard, for example, of the levying of ship-money on the port towns which had caused so much ill-feeling throughout the country, and travellers had told us of the resistance offered to it by Mr. John Hampden and others. We had heard, too, of the harsh punishment meted out to Prynne, the lawyer, and to his companions Burton and Bastwick, whose path from the prison to the pillory in Palace Yard the populace had strewn with flowers. Then had come to us news of the disturbances in Scotland, where the King was fighting against numerous malcontents. Nothing but trouble and sorrow, indeed, seemed to follow the King at that time, and every traveller brought bad news of great affairs. The Earl of Strafford had been executed. The House of Commons had passed its Grand Remonstrance against the King, who, in his turn, had impeached five of its members of high treason, and attempted to seize them in the House itself.

Things, indeed, were in a sad state, and yet because we were a long way from London it seemed to us that we were out of danger and need do nothing but attend to our own matters and thank God that we had been born to quiet lives.

"Think you we shall hear aught of it in these parts?" I asked, thinking these matters over as I stood by Philip Lisle's horse.

"Nay, lad, I cannot say. But, hark ye, Will, I am on my way to Nottingham, where is to be a meeting of the King's friends this week, and I shall hear news there. And so little faith have I of returning to Carlisle yet awhile that I have brought Rose southwards with me. We came here but an hour ago, and Rose is going to stay with the old woman at the inn yonder for a couple of days until I return with more certain news."

"Nay," said I, "why should Mistress Rose stay at the inn when Dale's Field is

so near? Mistress Rose, persuade your father to bring you up to Dale's Field. Come, sir, if you are in no great need to ride on, go up and sup with me. My mother and sister will be glad to see you once more, and they will welcome your daughter heartily."

"Thou speakest kindly, Will," said Philip Lisle. "What do you say, Rose? Wouldst rather stay with Mistress Dale than at the inn yonder?"

"I would rather stay with Mistress Dale," said Rose.

"Then we will go up with thee, Will. Indeed, man, I should have come to see thee but for fear of waking sad memories. It was but a sad time when I saw thy poor mother last. But now, here is Rose's horse at the inn stable. What shall we do with him?"

"I will send a man for him, sir," said I. "Make yourself easy about that."

So we went up the hill and turned in at the orchard gate of Dale's Field and went into the house. Parson Drumbleforth and Jack had gone homeward, but Ben Tuckett had gotten himself a few days' holiday and was to stay with us over the festivities, and we now found him making himself agreeable to my mother and Lucy. I led Philip and Rose into my mother's parlour and fetched her in to them from the great kitchen, whispering to her who our visitors were and what I wanted. And she, receiving them with hearty hospitality, would not be content until they sat down and ate and drank, and she sent Lucy off to prepare a chamber for Rose, and herself pressed Philip Lisle to remain overnight with us and continue his journey next day. But to that he could not consent.

"Indeed," said he, "I ought to be an hour on my journey now, and should have been, only I must needs linger on the bridge

saying farewell to this maid of mine until Will yonder comes up and presses me to enjoy your hospitality, Mistress Dale. And glad enough I am, I assure you, to leave my Rose in such good hands for a day or two, for 'tis but poor work for young maidens to stay at a wayside inn, though well enough for old campaigners like myself."

"We shall take good care of her here, sir," said my mother, stroking Rose's hand with her own as she sat by her. "Please God you will bring us back good news, for we need better than we have had lately."

But on that point Philip Lisle could say nothing certain. Presently he rose and bid my mother and Lucy farewell, and kissed Rose, and I went out with him and walked by his horse's side to the gate, where he stayed a moment to speak to me.

"I may return this way, Will," said he, "to-morrow night, or next day. When I come I shall have news. Say naught to

any one, lad, but I fear that there are great things at hand."

"You fear war?"

"Ay, and such war as is worse than war 'twixt two nations. It will be war of brother upon brother, which is a bad and sorry matter. However, let us do our best. Fare thee well, good Will, till I come again."

And with that he shook Cæsar's bridle and rode away into the moonlight, and I stood there until the sound of the horse's hoofs died away, and then went indoors to find Lucy and Ben Tuckett telling Rose about our doings that day and of the grand entertainment we were to have on the morrow.

Now to see Rose Lisle sitting there in my own house by my mother's side was to me the greatest delight I had ever known. For it seemed somehow as if Rose and I were old and familiar friends, though, indeed, we had only met once in all our lives, and that

many years before when we were but boy and girl. I could not choose but look at her as she sat there talking to my mother, and I wondered if there were any other maidens in the world who were half so fair as she. I had never forgotten how she looked that afternoon when I tumbled out of the elm-tree, having kept the memory of her fresh in my heart. Then she was a little dark-eyed, gipsy-looking maiden, with a merry laugh and an arch way of looking at you. Now she had become tall and stately and graver of face, but she was more beautiful, and when she smiled I saw the old arch look in her dark eyes. Very often she glanced at me as I sat watching her, and it seemed to me that a man could have no greater happiness than to have such eyes for his light all through life.

Now, Ben Tuckett was nothing if not soft-hearted, and when my mother and Lucy had taken Rose to her chamber, what must

he do but pull his chair up to mine and begin to pour out his sorrows into my ear.

"Will," said he, "I know you are in love with Mistress Rose yonder, for no one who is not blind could fail to see it."

"You can see more than I can, then, Master Ben," I answered. "Why, man, I have never seen her since she was a child until this night."

"No matter," said he. "Time is nothing to a lover. You see your sweetheart, and it is all over in an instant. Why, Will, your eyes were upon her every minute of the time!"

I made an impatient movement, not being inclined for this sort of conversation.

"However," continued Ben, "I am not going to talk of that, having other matters which are perhaps more interesting to me. Will, dear lad, hast ever noticed how it is with me?"

I knew quite well what he was aiming at, but I was willing to jest with him a little.

"Nay," I said, "what is it, Ben? You are certainly not so fat as you were, but 'tis the hot weather that has pulled you down."

"You will jest, Will. But there are other matters than hot weather that pull a man down. Though as to being fat, I am not sorry to see myself going thinner. I had rather be a bean-stalk than a butter-tub. But seriously, Will, have you any objection to me for a brother-in-law?"

"Nay, lad," said I, "not a whit. I love thee, old Ben, just as I love Jack and Tom, which is to say, as if ye all three were brothers of mine already."

He shook my hand heartily at that, and said he was sure of it.

"You see, Will," he continued, "I am now out of my apprenticeship, and my old master, having had enow of trade, is minded to give up his business to me, so that I shall be

my own master in future and doing for myself. And so, lad, having loved Lucy this many a year, I shall now ask her to marry me."

"I wish you success, Ben," I said. "You will get a good wife."

"No better," said he, "in all the world. Oh, Will, 'tis a rare thing to be a lover. The world seems a new place to a man in love, even if he be such a humdrum individual as I. Well, ye will not be long out of love yourself, Will. Mistress Rose's dark eyes will be too powerful for you."

But I dare not think of aught of that sort yet, for Rose seemed to me like a young goddess whom all might admire and reverence, but none claim for his own. Yet I thought much of her that night, for the excitement of the day had made me restless, so that I could not sleep, which was a rare thing with me. However, I paid for it next morning, sleeping two hours over my usual time, and waking to find that it was already

seven o'clock, and the sun high in the heavens. When I went downstairs I found that Lucy and Ben Tuckett had gone into the barn to make some arrangements for the evening's festivities, and that my mother and Rose were in the garden, which my mother was very fond of showing to her visitors. There I joined them, and found Rose more attractive than ever in the fresh morning light. Presently my mother went indoors to hurry on the breakfast preparations, and Rose and I were left together. And of what we talked I know not, save that it was about ourselves, and that I could have stayed there for ever, listening to her voice, and watching the smiles come and go on her sweet face. And then I suddenly remembered the primrose she had given me years before, and led her to the corner of the garden where I had buried it in my lead box.

"Do you remember, Mistress Rose," I

said, "the primrose you pinned in my coat that afternoon, and the guinea your father gave me when he carried you away? Let us see if they are still where I put them."

I got a spade, and began to turn up the soil, which had never been disturbed since the day I buried the lead box there. Presently I turned it up to the light, and placed it in her hands, and bade her open it, while I looked over her shoulder, to see how the treasures had fared.

"Oh!" she cried; "see, the primrose is still unfaded, and here is the guinea. And you have kept them all these years! But was it not a strange place to keep them, where you could never see them?"

"Why," I said, "it was the only place I could call my own. Let me put them back, and do you put another flower in the lead box, and we will dig them up again at some future time, and see how they fare."

"What shall I put in?" she said.

"There are nothing but roses now, I think. This red rose?" and she put it with the primrose, and shut the box, and gave it back to me with a merry laugh, and watched me carefully bury it again. Then, as we were going back to the house, she said, "I, too, kept some of the primroses gathered that afternoon, and they are pressed between the leaves of an old book at home. Some day, perhaps, I shall show them to you."

That made me very happy, for I saw that Rose had not forgotten the day when she first met me in the woods above the old mill, but had thought sometimes of it and of me.

CHAPTER XII.

OF THE FIRST TIDINGS OF WAR.

THAT day was an eventful one to us at Dale's Field in more than one way. As soon as breakfast was over we had to commence our preparations for the evening's festivities, which were to be on a larger scale than those of the previous day. Everybody was busily engaged, and there seemed some difficulty as to what should be done with Rose, until she offered to help my mother.

"For I know something about these matters, Mrs. Dale," said she, "and will help you if I may, and you will command me. I

dare say you will find me of some use where all are so busy."

And therewith my mother furnished her with a large apron and set her to dust the best china, which was a great honour, as I presently told her, no one but my mother ever daring so much as to touch those priceless cups and platters.

"Then indeed, I am highly honoured," she said, while I stood there and watched her graceful fingers move about the things. "But you, Master William, is there nothing that you can do? For you seem to be the only one who is doing nothing."

Now, I ought to have been riding round the fields at that moment, but I felt compelled to stay where I was—why, I know not.

"There is nothing that I can do," I said. "I am so awkward and clumsy that they trust nothing to me. If you like I will help you to wipe these dishes, Mistress Rose."

"Nay," she said, "if you are so awkward as all that, I fear the poor dishes would come to the ground. But why do you not help your sister and Master Tuckett to decorate the barn? I saw them go across the fold a few minutes ago with a basket of flowers."

"They will be as well pleased at my absence as with my company," I said, "or better."

"And why?"

"Because two's company and three's none, and Ben and Lucy are very fond of each other's company."

"But surely there must be something you can be doing," she said. "A man should never be idle."

"I am well enough here watching you," I answered.

"If you watch me, I shall be sure to let the china fall, and then your mother will be sorry she entrusted it to my hands. Now, see, there is a young gentleman riding

into the yard; you must go out and see him."

"Nay," said I, glancing out of the window, "'tis only Jack Drumbleforth, our parson's son. He will find his way in here readily enough without my meeting him."

And presently indeed we saw Jack striding across the fold in the direction of the kitchen-door, which he threw open a minute later with a cheery salutation. I can yet see his start of surprise and the astonished look on his face when he found me leaning against the wall talking to a beautiful young lady whom he had never seen before.

"Come in, Jack," said I. "Let me present thee to an old friend of mine, Mistress Rose Lisle. Mistress Rose, this gentleman is my old schoolmate, Master John Drumbleforth."

Then I stood smiling upon them while Jack made his best bow and Rose curtsied to him in the finest fashion.

"Mistress Rose," said Jack, still astonished of face, "I am your most humble servant. What Will here says of me is indeed true, for we were lads together. But he did never tell me of his old friend Mistress Rose Lisle."

"Master Dale is jesting with you, sir," said Rose. "He hath nothing better to do this fine morning, when we are all so busy."

"Nay," said I, "'tis true enough. Did I never tell thee, Jack, of how I fell from the elm in Went Vale yonder and was ministered to by an angel?"

"But that is many years ago," said Rose, "and the angel was a little girl in a red hood."

"But nevertheless it was Mistress Rose Lisle. So that I was right in saying 'an old friend,' eh, Jack?"

"I am not sorry thou didst fall out of the elm tree, Will," said Jack, "if it made Mistress Rose friend of thine. I have had

many a tumble myself, but I never fell in Fortune's way. However, there may be a chance now. Will, what dost say if I go to the wars?"

"To the wars? Man, thou art to be a parson."

"Time enough for that when we have done with fighting. For fighting there will be ere long, so sure as my name is Jack Drumbleforth."

"Have you heard some fresh news, sir?" asked Rose.

"Nay, mistress, nothing very fresh, save that it is said the King and Commons have come to an open breach at last, and that blood will certainly be shed. Hah!" said Jack, taking down and looking lovingly at my ancient broadsword, "I am afraid there is more of the swashbuckler about me than the parson. I did ever love a fight, Will, as you know. Well, there will be heads broken."

"But which side wilt thou fight for, Jack?"

But at that he shook his head. It was a question which puzzled many men at that time.

"Nay, lad, that I cannot answer yet awhile. I am for the monarchy, of course, for there is warrant for that. Yet I would hear something of the other side of the question before I take sword in hand. Mark thee, Will, there will be many a man in England take sides in this quarrel who knows nothing of what he is fighting for. It will be enough for such that they fight."

Which saying was true enough as events proved. But we had no time to discuss it then, for my mother entered the kitchen, and bade us both begone for idlers, at which Rose laughed, and we perforce departed into the fold.

"Zounds, Will!" said Jack, when we were clear of the house, "it is not like thee to have kept the fame of Mistress Rose Lisle

to thyself. Ah! thou hast a keen eye for beauty, my old friend Will. Well, I wish thee good luck. I will dance at thy wedding, an I be not killed first."

"Why, man," said I, "have I not told thee I never saw Mistress Rose yonder but once, when she was a little maid that high, and I a great boy with a thick head? It is soon to talk of weddings."

"May be," said he, "but if thou art not falling in love with her, call me a Dutchman. I know the signs, Will. What! I was in love myself at Oxford with Gillian, the pastry-cook's daughter. Poor Gillian—the lightest foot, I think, that ever trod a measure, and could make you the sweetest tarts I ever set tooth in! Well, I am like to be happy with ye here at Dale's Field, for there are Ben and Lucy looking unutterable things at each other in the barn, and thou wilt be sighing like a furnace ere long. As for me, I shall never marry, Will. An I survive the wars I

will take orders and live in some sweet spot where I can compose madrigals and sonnets to Phyllis. I flatter me that I have as pretty a taste in that line as man need have."

"Thou seemest resolved that there shall be some fighting, Jack."

"Why, yes. For, dost thou not see, the land is now in such a state that heads must be broken ere ever things will heal? 'Tis a sad business, but war there must be."

Then we went to our respective duties, Jack to superintend certain arrangements which he had taken upon himself, and I to ride round the farm on my horse, in which usual task I spent two hours, so that the morning was far advanced when I returned to the house. Ben and Lucy were still busied in the barn, in which we were to dance that evening, and very fine they had made it look when I put my head in at the door to peep at them. The walls were ornamented with green stuff; there were

seats all round for the old folks, and such as did not dance; and there was a raised platform at one end for the fiddlers to sit on. Calling my approval to Ben and Lucy, I went round the buildings to the garden, where I expected to find Jack. There, indeed, I did find him, leaning against the wall with his coat off and his hat pushed back from his forehead, his kerchief in one hand, and a tankard of ale in the other. And there in front of him, laughing at some joke of his, stood Rose, bearing a trencher, on which was a jug from which she had just filled Jack's tankard. When she saw me she set down the trencher, and ran away to the kitchen, returning presently with another tankard, which she filled and offered to me as I came up to them.

"Mistress Rose," I said, "I know not why it is, but surely our ale never tasted half so fine as this."

"Well said, Will," said Jack. "That,

indeed, is just what I thought. For mark you, I have been toiling so hard that my mouth was as dry as a bone, and I could not forbear imploring Mistress Rose to bring me a tankard of ale. And indeed 'tis nectar, and Mistress Rose is Hebe, and we are gods."

But Rose laughed, and ran away, and Jack and I were left alone.

"Jack, Jack!" I said. "I fear me thou hast a soft heart. What, dost not know the way to our cellar thyself long before this?"

"There is a deal in service, lad. I cannot away with your ugly waiter who sets down your pot with a scowl on his ill-favoured countenance. But a Hebe with eyes like violets, and a shape like Spring—why, the liquor seems to leap divine in the pewter. 'Tis a beautiful maiden, though, Will, and a good, and will make thee such a wife as a man should pray for. Ah me! it must be a fine thing to be wedded to a good woman."

"Thou speakest as if thou wert married to some old shrew," said I.

"Why, in one sense, Will, I am, for I am married to myself, and what worse partner can a man have? I am neither fish, flesh, nor good red herring. However, I may be good enough to go to the wars and handle a pike."

So the day wore on, and at last all my preparations were made, and it was time for our guests to arrive. We were all arrayed in our finest clothes, and looked, I think, very grand, especially Ben Tuckett, who had brought with him a new lace coat which was very fine indeed, and much admired by everybody. There had been much consultation during the day between Lucy and Rose, for the latter had brought but a simple gown and riding habit with her upon her travels, and she was puzzled how to honour my coming of age in a fitting manner. However, she and Lucy were much of a size, and

at last Rose appeared in a white gown that Lucy had lent her, and looked so beautiful in it that Jack and Ben and myself were struck dumb with admiration, and swore amongst ourselves that we had never seen so fair a maiden, though Ben immediately afterwards recanted, and said that he must on consideration give the palm to Lucy.

My mother had insisted on asking all our friends and acquaintance to honour us with their presence, and by six o'clock in the evening there was quite a large assemblage on our lawn, and our stables were full of horses ridden by their owners from a distance. When we were all assembled, we adjourned to the great kitchen, where we were able to accommodate nearly one hundred guests, and there we all sat down to supper, I again sitting at the head of the table, with Parson Drumbleforth on my right, and Lawyer Hook on my left. And after dinner there were speeches made, and my

health was drunk, and I was loudly congratulated. But I thought somehow that Jack had the best time of it after all, for he sat next to Rose, and talked to her constantly. However, as I found out afterwards, the honest fellow was sounding my praises in her ears all the time, which was just like him. After supper was well over, we walked about on the lawn and in the orchard for a time, while Jack Drumbleforth and Ben Tuckett saw to the lighting of the lamps and candles in the barn. This done, we all went thither, and the fiddler, being supplied with a jug of ale, was bidden to ply his elbow merrily for a country dance. Then arose within me considerable wonder as to which of my guests I should ask to dance with me. This question Lucy settled to my satisfaction by saying that as Rose was the greatest stranger I should lead off the dance with her. So then I had the great happiness of leading Rose out into the

middle of the floor, and Ben Tuckett led out Lucy, and the others followed in due course, and the fiddler scraped away with his bow, and we all felt as happy as children. But just as we were beginning the first steps, and Rose was laughingly showing me what to do next, for I was no great hand at it, I heard the sound of a horse's feet on the stones in the yard. And then I saw Philip Lisle coming in behind the people, dusty, travel-stained, and tired. Rose and I made for him through the throng. The people gave over dancing, and the fiddler stopped with his bow in mid-air.

"What news?" I cried, for I saw that he had news. The people crowded round him to hear his answer. He stayed on the threshold, and raised his hat.

"God save the King!" he cried. "His Majesty raised his flag at Nottingham against his enemies, the day before yesterday. God save the King!"

Now, there were some that echoed Philip Lisle's cry heartily. But there were others who said nothing and looked very grave, while Parson Drumbleforth shook his head sadly, saying that the kingdom which is divided against itself shall not stand. And thus the red shadow of war suddenly loomed over all our merrymaking.

CHAPTER XIII.

OF PHILIP LISLE'S CALL TO ARMS.

I THINK there was little more dancing amongst us upon that evening, for no one seemed to have much heart left for merrymaking after hearing Philip Lisle's news. Certainly the country had not been so peaceful during the past few years as to make us feel that we were suddenly thrown out of a state of security into a condition of danger. No man, I suppose, had thought that the difference 'twixt King and Commons could have other ending than this. For so many years had the struggle gone on and always with so much increase of bitterness

on either side that nothing but the shedding of blood could bring peace to us again. And yet civil war is a terrible and a fearful thing, for it is, as I think, a setting of brother against brother and father against son. Now, I think naught of one nation going to war with another, for that seems natural and is only to be looked for, seeing that human nature is what it is. Indeed, to fight with Frenchmen or Spaniards seems to be one of the chief duties of a true Englishman who loves his country. But for Englishmen to fight with Englishmen, that, indeed, is vastly out of place and ought never to be.

The assembly broke up into knots and fell to discussing the situation. Parson Drumbleforth, whose face had grown very anxious when he heard the news, drew near to Philip Lisle and began to question him. A group of others stood round us, hearkening to what was said.

"The King, you say, sir, hath raised his

standard at Nottingham?" said Parson Drumbleforth.

"He hath, your Reverence. On the 22nd of August he raised it, and is now gathering round him all that are loyal to His Majesty."

"Hath the King much following, sir?"

"He hath the majority of the Lords, sir, and as for the Commons there are large numbers of the members of that House who will serve His Majesty."

"But the country, sir," said Parson Drumbleforth, "how will the country go?"

"If the people do their duty, sir, will they not serve their King to whom they owe allegiance?"

Parson Drumbleforth shook his head at that and said that these were sad days.

"For mark you, Master Lisle," continued he, "I am a Royalist to my last breath and to the last throb of my heart, for so I am commanded by my conscience and my reason.

And yet I do think that in this matter His Majesty hath not been well advised and will ultimately suffer. I agree not with them who clamour for the right of the people. I had rather be ruled by a tyrant than by Demos, for your tyrant is but one man, but Demos is a beast of many heads and dispositions. Nevertheless, it had been well, I think, to humour the popular mind somewhat in this case. For I fear me, Master Lisle, that if it come to a case of endurance 'twixt the throne and the people, the throne will come badly out of it."

But Philip Lisle shook his head at that and seemed to regard Parson Drumbleforth as a faint-hearted Royalist at the best.

"We have taken to the sword," said Philip Lisle, "and by the sword we shall put down this bad feeling towards the monarchy. What, are those who are ruled to say how they shall be ruled? It used to be said that power came from God, but according

to these new teachers it cometh from the people."

"Alas!" said Parson Drumbleforth, "there are many false teachers abroad, certainly. But, oh, sirs, it is a terrible matter, this civil war, and I would that we could see the end of it. For mind you, Master Lisle, these disaffected men will fight, ay, to the death. I hear they are smarting grievously under a sense of wrong, and such men will give and take many a hard blow ere the affair be settled."

"The King hath his army," said Philip Lisle.

"If the King hath the people against him, his army will stand him in little stead, sir," said an old gentleman, Master Geoffrey Oldthwaite, who had listened attentively to the conversation between Philip Lisle and the vicar. "Whether His Majesty know it or not, or whether or not they that advise him know it, there is a strong feeling against

the King all through the land. For mark you, sir—I speak freely—we Englishmen, as you should know, being one yourself, do like that our liberties should be preserved and honoured, we being a free people and of a proud nature. Now, there are many who do not consider that the King hath conserved the liberties of the people. See what vexatious matters have come upon us in this reign. Hath His Majesty ever been at one with the members whom we send to represent us in Parliament? Have there not been disputes concerning tonnage and poundage, ship-money, and impropriations? We have also heard, sir, of the Star Chamber and of the sentences upon Masters Prynne and Bastwick, and now the King hath endeavoured to seize five representatives of the people sitting in their House. These matters, sir, do not find acceptance with Englishmen. I speak freely, being an Englishman."

"It is true," sighed Parson Drumbleforth; "it is true there have been grievances. Whenever was it not so? As for me, though I am a Royalist, I can never forget that Saul was anything but a blessing to his people. What we want, sirs, is mutual long-suffering. If the King hath his rights, so have the people theirs. If he hath his duties, so have they their duties."

"His Majesty," said Philip Lisle, "desires not to punish any that are well disposed, but only them that are traitorous. If any man have grievance against the State, let him make his grievance known."

"What, to the Star Chamber?" said some one in the rear of the group. "Would he find justice there, think you?"

"At any rate," cried Philip, "'tis poor work to fight against your lawful sovereign. Sir, you are a clerk and a learned man; tell us, now, is there Scriptural warrant for this rising against His Majesty? I am no saint

nor much of a scholar, but I have read the Scriptures somewhat, and never did I find aught commanding men to rise up in rebellion against the lawful power."

"It is true," answered Parson Drumbleforth. "We are commanded to honour the King in the same precept which bids us to fear God. Moreover, we are bound as faithful servants to yield ourselves to the powers set over us, for all power is of God, Who hath a fatherly care over His children and would not allow evil to be done, though His ways do oft seem mysterious and inscrutable. Nay, truly, it is not in Holy Writ that any man finds warrant to rise up against authority."

Now, Master Oldthwaite shook his head at this, not liking the turn of the conversation, for he was a Parliamentarian and supported that cause to his utmost; but Philip Lisle seized upon the parson's statement eagerly, and began to appeal to us

who stood round him to help in the King's cause.

"Gentlemen," said he, "ye hear what your vicar saith as to this matter. The King hath Scripture and reason on his side. Who can stand against these two? Gentlemen, in this contest no man can remain undecided. Ye must choose one side or the other. It must be either King or Parliament. As for me, I am for the King —God preserve him!—and whether the fight go well or ill I will stand by that until the end come. But you, sirs, will you not join me in serving under His Majesty's banner? There are here young and lusty men of able bodies who might strike many a hearty blow for a good cause. Come, gentlemen, let me ride back to Nottingham with a goodly troop of horse behind me. Will Dale, what sayest thou? John Drumbleforth, thou art no traitor? Ben Tuckett, there is good stuff in thee. Francis

Wood, thy great arms and broad shoulders should give many a swinging blow. Come, boys, say you will go forth like the men you are, to rally round your sovereign's standard with the flower of England, and help him to subdue all his enemies. What! must I appeal in vain to you, lads of Yorkshire? In old times men were not slow in coming forward to fight for their king, and the Yorkshire lads were always in front."

"Yorkshire favours not the King in this matter, sir," said old Master Oldthwaite.

"Faith, sir, you are wrong, then," said Jack Drumbleforth, "at least so far as one Yorkshire man is concerned. For here, Master Lisle, am I. I will go and fight for the King, an His Majesty will have me. I am not so tall, but I am exceeding broad, and ye may rest assured that wherever I am there will be broken heads. So God save the King!"

"Oh, John, John!" said the vicar. "And

thou wert meant for the Church, for a man of peace."

"Time enow for that, father, when peace comes. I shall make no worse soldier of the Church for first splitting a few skulls. Besides, I am a man of muscle, and of thew and sinew. Yes, I will go with you to the wars, Master Lisle, whether any others go or not."

"And I will go with you," said Francis Wood.

But beyond these two no one spoke. There were many there who were true to the throne, but they had their farms to think of, and their families, and their chief desire was that the tide of war might sweep aside and leave them and theirs untouched. So Philip Lisle at that time got small response to his pleading on the King's behalf.

There was little more merrymaking that night, and ere long the guests had gone

away along the quiet lanes. Philip Lisle, Jack, Ben, and I were left talking in the garden. The women were gossiping together in the house. As for Parson Drumbleforth, he had ridden home to his vicarage in his churchwarden's cart.

"Will," said Philip Lisle, as we strolled about the moonlit garden—"Will, you must join us. Here is Jack, and young Francis Wood will go. You must make a third; and you, Ben, will you not make a fourth?"

Now, when I had heard Philip Lisle's appeal, my heart had felt a great desire to go to the wars, and I was tempted to say so at the time. But there were so many hindrances in the way that I could not see my way to saying that I would follow the King's standard. For if I went to fight, who would look after the farm and defend the women if such times arose as would lead to their danger? An I had been all alone in those days, I would have gone

willingly enough, and would have served the King to my last breath. As for the rights and wrongs of the matter I knew little, nay, I say frankly enough that I was with the King all through that terrible time because he was the King, for I am a Royalist to the backbone. Wrongs there doubtless were, and maybe somewhat in the nature of oppression, but for all that he was the King, and we had sworn allegiance to him. Therefore, I say, I would cheerfully have followed Philip Lisle to fight under the royal standard, but for the care of my mother and sister and the farm. What were the women to do without me to guard them; what would become of my farm and stock if I left them to the care of others?

"I would go willingly enough if it were not for that," said I, explaining my reasons to Philip Lisle. "But it would seem that duty calls me to abide here presently.'

"Tut, lad," said he, "duty calls thee to the King's side. The women are safe enow here, and as for the farm and stock, why, thy mother and Jacob Trusty will take good care of it, I warrant. Come, go with me, Will."

"Let me think the matter over," I said. "I am much inclined to go with you. Think you the war will come this way?"

"Nay," he said, "who can say? I think it will not be of long endurance. The King is getting him a strong army together, and should read these fellows such a lesson that they will quickly lay down their arms and submit themselves to His Majesty's clemency."

"Who leads the Parliamentary forces, sir?" asked Jack.

"That is not yet known, lad, but it is said the Earl of Essex will take command. 'Tis a sober and steady head, but he hath not the military genius. He will be prudent

and wary, and will fight you a battle admirably on paper, but he will fail in those flashes of genius which show the great soldier."

"And the King, sir, who hath he to advise him?"

"Why, lad, he hath Falkland, and he hath Prince Rupert, and he hath Hyde—three counsellors from whom he will gain a diversity of opinions. It is on Rupert that I rely. There, lads, is a soldier for you! Full of dash and fire he is, and will lead a cavalry charge against whatever obstacle comes in his way. Hah! we shall have some fine times of it when Rupert falls upon these psalm-singing rascals."

"Master Oldthwaite would say, sir, that these same psalm-singing rascals will show fight," said Jack Drumbleforth.

"Master Oldthwaite, Jack, is a seditious old knave, or, if that term be too strong, he is not well disposed towards His Majesty.

I fear he will do some harm about this district, that same Master Oldthwaite."

"He is not alone," said Ben Tuckett, "in his advocacy of the Parliamentary cause. For whether you know it or not, Master Lisle, this part of the land is not for His Majesty."

"I know it well enough, Ben, and there is therefore the greater need of care in what those say who are for the King. No, lads, it is the north and west of the land that favours the King; the south and the east are against His Majesty, led away as they are by their agitating leaders."

"I have heard say," continued Ben, "that there will be trouble in our town, for whichever party holds the Castle, the other will not rest until it hath dislodged it. Alas! 'tis a sad business, and one that fills me with much concern."

"Come with me to the wars then, Ben," said Jack Drumbleforth. "I warrant that

arm of thine can strike a blow for the King to some purpose."

"I am not without some strength," said Ben, shaking his fist, "but I shall not use it in this quarrel, Jack, unless it be to defend myself or my own. What, because Tom and Bill choose to fall out and fight, is that any reason why I should get my head broken between them?"

"'Tis a false parallel, sir," said Philip Lisle.

"With submission, sir, 'tis a very true one. Did I do aught to encourage King and Parliament in going to war with each other? To tell the truth I care no jot for either, being a free man and a burgess. Let them that made the quarrel settle the quarrel. God grant that in the settling they ruin not the land!"

This method of dealing with the matter did not seem to find much favour with Philip Lisle, who only regarded the subject from

one point of view, and liked not that any one should deal with it from any other.

"I am sorry, lad," said he, "that thou hast so little loyalty to thy sovereign. Young men, however, are not what they were, for at one time a lusty fellow like thee would have seized his pike and struck a blow for Merry England."

"An it come to striking a blow for Merry England, sir," said Ben, "I am with you. Let Spaniard or Turk so much as set foot within the land, and I will show you whether or no I will fight. Yea, then I would fight till I could fight no more. But is this quarrel for England?"

"Yea," said Philip Lisle, "for England and the liberties of the English people."

In that he expressed the sentiments of the Royalists. It was the watchword of the cause, even as the King said years later on the fatal scaffold at Whitehall.

"At any rate," said Jack Drumbleforth,

"I am going, and woe be to the seditious knave that comes in my way. Who knows? I may carve my way to fortune. Sir John Drumbleforth would sound well, or even Baron Drumbleforth. Thou seest, Ben, what a chance thou art missing. Baron Tuckett, or Sir Benjamin. Well, God send us all safe out of it!"

CHAPTER XIV.

OF THE DISTURBANCE IN PONTEFRACT MARKET-PLACE.

IT can hardly be said that Philip Lisle's appeal to those gathered together in our barn had met with much success, for of all the men he spoke to, only two had promised to go with him, and both these were men who, however brave, were somewhat of weathercocks and apt to turn to whatever their humour tempted them at chance times. Not that I would say aught against my dear friend, Jack Drumbleforth, who was as brave and valiant as any man could be. But he had a somewhat flyaway

disposition, this Jack, and was apt to take sides in a quarrel without knowing much of the matter in dispute. As for Frank Wood, he had done little all his life but make love to the girls and crack jokes with whosoever would talk with him, and he was fond of excitement and adventure. Both, then, went to the war more from a liking of change than from inclination, and neither needed much converting to the King's side. And yet there were no braver soldiers fought in that quarrel than these two, who showed their natural gallantry many a time and endured privation and care for the sake of the cause they had espoused.

"I had hoped to take a goodly company from here, Will," said Philip Lisle, "and yet we have got but two volunteers so far. What do you think—shall I meet with any success in this neighbourhood?"

Now, I could not rightly answer him as to that, for I knew little of the feeling round

about us, having rarely spoken to my acquaintance of matters concerning politics, which in my opinion were the natural concern of wise men, and not of humble folk like myself. But it occurred to me that Philip Lisle might easily satisfy himself on the subject by going with me to the market at Pontefract, and there making such inquiries among the people as he thought fit. Which project, when I mentioned it to him, he warmly commended and promised to put in execution.

"Thou seest, Will," said he, "His Majesty hath been exceeding gracious to me who for many a long year carried on the trade of a robber and a highwayman, and thus forfeited my life many a time, though indeed I never robbed a poor man in all my life, but only such as could well afford to disburse. I hold here a free pardon, and have also served the King faithfully these many years, and I would fain do something for

my master, if only to show my gratitude. For 'tis a poor dog, Will, that does not lick the hand that feeds it. An thou wouldst go with me, Will, I should be content, though I had but ye three."

"But, sir, what would my mother and Lucy do—and your own daughter, Mistress Rose, too—what would they all do left alone here without protection? And the farm? Jacob is old and he gets feeble, though none dare say so in his presence, and things would go to rack and ruin in my absence."

"Why," said he, "we must all risk something when duty calls. As for Rose, she is well used to taking care of herself, though indeed it hath somewhat puzzled me to know how she is to make her way back to Carlisle while I am away from her."

"That she must not do, sir," I answered. "Let her abide here with my mother and sister so that she will have women with her. Maybe things will go on quietly hereabouts."

"I fear there will be strife round here, Will. Yonder Castle will prove a bone of contention. However, Rose shall abide where she is, and she will thank thee herself for thy kindness."

"Nay, sir, we want no thanks." Nor did we, for we were only too pleased to have Mistress Rose amongst us. As for me, what with seeing her daily and thinking about her when I did not see her, I was rapidly becoming more interested in Rose Lisle than was well for my peace of mind. Nay, I already looked forward to some occasion when I might perhaps show my devotion for her by protecting her from the dangers which seemed to threaten all of us.

But Ben Tuckett, if he would not go to the wars, was minded to win some glory by showing his valour at home, and it presently turned out that he desired nothing so much as to be the protector and defender of the women in our house, and more especially of

my sister Lucy. This much I learnt from him in person the day after the merry-making, when he was leaving us to go back to his shop in Pontefract.

"I can see, Will," said he, "that thou wouldst like to travel to the wars, and I wonder not at it. If I were a King's man like thee, I would go. But I am not. I am for neither—only I wish they may soon get matters settled. But if I were thou, I would go."

"The women, Ben, the women; and the farm! What is to become of them?"

"Why," said Benjamin, scratching his head as if a fine idea had suddenly struck him—"why, how should I do as a guardian and a caretaker? 'Od's rats, I know a good deal about farming, and what I don't know Jacob Trusty will teach me. And as for taking care of the women, ah, I am a famous hand with quarter-staff and pikestaff, and can strike a blow with anybody."

"And what of your own affairs, Master Ben—who is to look after them?"

"Why," said he, "would it not be possible to combine the two, think you, Will? For surely 'tis but a step from Pontefract to Dale's Field, and I do not see why I could not watch two birds at once. And then, Will, thou couldst go to the wars with a light heart."

"Why, Ben, thou speakest as if it were a matter of joy to go and fight! Well, I like thy humour. Why, man, bethink thee! As for me, I see naught but sighs and sorrowing, tears and bloodshed for many a year to come."

"What, do you think it will be as bad as that, Will? God forbid. However, if thou art minded to fight for the King, I will see to thy mother and Lucy, and to Mistress Rose, too. I am not a man of war myself, but I can defend them, I think, to some purpose.'

Now, it was certainly very kind of my old friend, Ben Tuckett, to make me so generous an offer, for there is no doubt that I was powerfully disposed to join the royal forces, being somewhat inclined to war from my boyhood, and having often thought over its glories and adventures as narrated to me by Jacob Trusty, who had a nice store of learning concerning Agincourt and Creçy. Again, there was the example of Jack Drumbleforth to influence me. I liked the idea of fighting shoulder to shoulder with Jack, who had a sure pluck, and would brave it out to the last gasp. In short, I was disposed to go with all my heart, but consideration for domestic matters held me back.

On the following Saturday, Philip Lisle, Jack Drumbleforth, and I rode into Pontefract, intending to see how certain of our acquaintance were disposed towards the Royalist cause. It was somewhat of a perilous thing

to do, for the townspeople, taking them on a whole, were on the side of the Parliament, and we ran a risk of suffering some unpleasantness for our zeal. Nevertheless, we determined to do what we could, knowing that there were some at least amongst the men we should meet there who would hear us with favour, and maybe respond to our appeal. What Philip Lisle wanted was men who could turn out equipped and armed with a good horse apiece, likely to stand some wear and tear, and true enough to the Royalist cause to make the quarrel a personal matter.

Now, because it is the centre of a rich agricultural district, the market at Pontefract is always largely attended by the neighbouring farmers, so that on market or fair days there are several hundred people scattered together in the market-place. There they meet and collect in groups, selling or buying various commodities of

their trade, or talking together over subjects connected therewith. And in one part of the market swine are sold, and in another corn, and in a third cattle, so that certain streets and alleys are called Pig Market, Beast Fair, Corn Market, and so forth. In the centre of the Market-place, and right against the church of St. Giles, stands the Butter Cross, round which the country wives congregate to sell their butter and eggs, and where there is a continual stream of chatter and gossip going on all day. A busy scene indeed it is on market-day; and as for the inns, they are as busy as the street, and do a good trade without intermission, for their doors are never shut, and the long-settles are always full of thirsty souls.

We had not been long in the town, and indeed had only just handed over our horses to the care of the ostler at the inn, when Ben Tuckett, who had returned to his shop on the previous day, caught sight of us in the

crowd, and beckoned us to come to him. So we edged our way across the Market-place at Ben's shop-door, where he stood looking complacently about him, clad in a white apron, and appearing the very ideal of a prosperous tradesman. Jack laughed loudly at the sight of Ben in his apron, for he looked so consequential and so important that his pride seemed somewhat like that of the turkey. When we drew near him, however, Ben's look of self-satisfaction changed to one of something like anxiety, and he drew us after him into his parlour, which lay behind his shop, and was out of earshot.

"Well," said Jack, "thou lookest very mysterious, Master Ben. Art plotting something treasonable, or is there going to be a rise in candles?"

"There may be a rise in heads before long, Jack," answered Ben, who was never put out nor annoyed. "Hark ye, gentlemen, I have news for you. Since I returned home

last night, which, God knows, I did reluctantly enough, being so fond of Dale's Field that I would——"

"To the point, good Ben, to the point," said I, impatiently.

"Well, then, since I came home, as I said, I have been making some inquiry amongst my fellows as to how folks are feeling in this town. Lads, there is not overmuch good disposition towards the King here. I fear ye will find little encouragement. I went amongst them last night and heard them talk," said Ben, shaking his head, "and I heard some mighty seditious language, Master Lisle. Star Chamber—Strafford, Laud, Prynne, ship-money, tonnage and poundage—these were the strings continually harped upon. So have a care, gentlemen, what you say here, for I assure you that the burgesses are pretty sore, and would, maybe, give a sorer head to anybody who offended them."

"That," said Jack, "is a game which two can play at."

"What would three of you do against a crowd? And there is a strong party amongst the magistrates who are Parliamentarians to the backbone. So, an I were you, I should keep quiet and leave the King to fight his own battles."

"You are a man of prudence, Master Tuckett," said Philip Lisle, with a grim smile on his face, "but an indifferent partisan."

"That's true," said Ben, "I am indifferent, because I care for neither party. As for me, I say, 'A plague o' both your houses.' God send ye ruin not my shop in your quarrels."

But in spite of Ben's advice we went away from him still determined to do what we could. Nevertheless, as prudent men, we did not deem it advisable to draw upon us the notice of those who, as Ben said,

favoured the Parliament. But we went amongst the crowd as if intent on our business or pleasure, speaking here to one and there to another, always selecting such as I knew to be well-disposed to the King, and doing what we could to induce likely looking fellows to join in with us. And amongst the yeomanry and the farmers, especially the younger men, we found many a man willing enough to join the Royalist army and to find horse and arms, but held back by the same obstacles which held me. There was a wife and child to protect, or an aged mother to care for; there were the farm and stock to manage, and so on. But we had many an expression of good-will, and many a promise to do the right thing if occasion came that way.

Now, as we moved about amongst the crowd, I noticed that we were watched more than once by old Master Oldthwaite, who, as you will remember, expressed his senti-

ments somewhat freely at my merrymaking a few nights before. I knew Master Oldthwaite to be a strong partisan of the Parliamentary party, for I had heard him say that no king at all was better than a bad king, and he oft gave utterance to severe gibes and taunts against Laud and the bishops, saying that they were wolves which ate up the sheep, rather than shepherds that took care of their flocks. He was indeed somewhat celebrated in Pontefract for his sentiments, for as he carried on the trade of a corn-dealer in that town, he was often heard in the inn-parlours, where the tradesmen meet to discuss all sorts of matters. Nevertheless, since I and my father before me had had many a transaction with Master Oldthwaite, and always been good friends with him, I did not think he would do me an injury or conspire against any friend of mine. But it would appear that his political sympathies overcame his

better feelings, for he took steps which presently resulted in much inconvenience to me and my companions.

It was drawing towards evening, and we three were standing in a quiet corner in the market square, conversing with a knot of young farmers, who were listening with great attention while Philip Lisle talked to them. There were a great many people round about us, and the noise and bustle of the market was as great as ever. Looking round I caught sight of Master Nicholas Pratt, a magistrate of the town, making for us through the crowd, followed in the rear by Master Oldthwaite and several others whom I knew to be staunch Parliamentarians. And then I felt that something was about to happen. In which presentiment I was not wrong, for Master Pratt, coming hastily to us, cried in a rough and insolent tone—

"How now, gentlemen, what do you mean by turning this public market into a recruit-

ing-ground for the King? Do you not know that you are committing a breach of the peace?"

Now, we had all three, and those with us, turned upon him when he first spoke, and we now stared at him with astonishment He was a large round-bellied man, with impudent manners and much pride, and as he stood swelling over us, I was reminded of our great turkey-cock at home.

"No, sir," said Philip Lisle, "we do not know that we are breaking the peace."

"Are you not recruiting for that traitor, Charles Stuart?" shouted the other, getting very red and fiery.

"We are recruiting for His Majesty the King, sir," answered Philip Lisle, "as we have a right to do."

"We will not have it in this free town, sir. Get you gone to where you came from. You are not known here. And you, Masters Dale and Drumbleforth, have a care what

you do, and do not disgrace yourselves by associating yourselves with adventurers and braggadocios?"

"What, sir!" cried Philip Lisle, laying his hand on his sword, "do you dare to insult one of His Majesty's officers?"

"Officers, quotha!" shouted a mocking voice from behind the magistrate. "Why, sirs, 'tis Black Phil, the highwayman. Pretty officer! If the King's officers are of this kidney he must have scoured them from the jails."

Now, Philip Lisle was so much enraged at this insult that he instantly drew his sword, and rushed forward to wreak his vengeance on the speaker. This was the signal for an immediate raising of sticks and staves, and Jack and I, nothing loth, got back to back behind Philip Lisle and began to lay about us with energy, so that there was some very pretty fighting went on for the space of five or six minutes. But we were outnumbered

by twelve to one, and presently Philip and Jack received such blows that they fell, and I was powerless.

"Carry them into my cellar," shouted Pratt to his men, "and lock them up there till such time as justice can be done upon them."

And therewith they haled us across the Market-place and shoved us into the magistrate's cellar, and locked us up with our bruises and our reflections, which just then were not at all pleasant.

CHAPTER XV.

OF OUR ESCAPE FROM THE MAGISTRATE'S CUSTODY.

NOW, what with the noise and confusion of the last few minutes, taken together with a somewhat hard blow that lighted upon the back of my head, I was so dazed and astonished that it was some moments before I fully recovered my senses. However, when I became master of myself, there I was, sure enough, in the cellar underneath the worthy magistrate's house. A remarkably dull and quiet place it was, and felt very damp and cold to my touch when I stretched out my hands and encountered the

walls and floor on which we had been unceremoniously thrown. There was rather more than a little water trickling down those walls, and my fingers encountering it bred in me a feeling of much resentment against our captors for treating us in such scurvy fashion. Moreover, the hole was so dark that I could see nothing, and there was not a single ray of light penetrating through niche or crevice. A most disagreeable place it indeed was, and doubly so to me, who until that moment had never been curtailed of my lawful liberty.

While I was dimly recognizing these matters, the rap on my head still troubling me somewhat, I was startled by a groan close at my left hand. This was succeeded by a succession of snorts and sniffs, as if some person were slowly awaking from a sound slumber, and presently my ears were saluted by the voice of Jack Drumbleforth, who had evidently been bundled into the

cellar in a much more damaged state than myself.

"Plague on it!" said Jack, as if grumbling to himself; "my head hums like a church tower in ringing time. Where on earth are we that 'tis so dark? Methinks this couch is not of the softest. Will—Will Dale!"

"I am near thee, Jack."

"Hah!" said he. "Well, I knew thou wouldst not be far away. Where are we, Will? Fighting we were, I know; and some ugly crop-eared varlet gave me a foul blow from the rear, and then—why, then I remember little more."

"Nor I, Jack, for some one treated me after the same fashion. But, Jack, where is Philip Lisle?"

"Plague on it! he was with us too. Nay, they may have killed honest Philip outright!"

"It may be that he is in this hole with

us," I said, beginning to feel around me in the darkness. "Stretch out your arms, Jack, and search for him."

Now, the whole place was so black that I was almost afraid to get on my legs and explore it, lest I should fall down some sudden pit in the floor, and thus come to worse things. However, I rose up, and cautiously felt around me, meeting with naught but damp walls and a slippery floor. Further off I heard Jack grumbling at our fate, and uttering many condemnations upon those who had brought us to it.

"An I had his worship down here," said Jack, "I would teach him better than to throw three gentlemen such as we into this vile fox-hole. What, things are come to a pretty pass indeed when a round-bellied old butcher like yonder shallow-pated grey-beard sits on the bench to administer justice! Where art thou, Will? As for me, I am wandering in Stygian darkness."

"Do you feel aught of Master Lisle, Jack?"

"Nay, lad, I have felt naught yet save this greasy floor and these damp walls. This—— Ah, here is something, Will, under my foot. 'Tis a man! I swear 'tis poor Master Lisle."

By that time I had felt my way towards Jack's direction, and I stooped down and laid my hand on the body.

"Master Lisle it is, Jack, and none other. Pray God he is not dead! Nay, his heart beats, and he breathes. If we had but a cup of water!"

"God be praised!" said Jack. "I have a bottle of cordial in my pocket, which I bought of Master Sage, the apothecary, for old Deborah, our housekeeper. She useth it for the falling sickness, but 'tis my opinion that it hath somewhat of strong waters in it, and is not ungrateful to the palate. What do you say, Will; shall we pour a drop into his mouth?"

"Quick, Jack, uncork the bottle and let me try it. I am holding his head on my knee. Can you feel him in the darkness? Pour it gently between his lips."

"Plague on this black hole!" said Jack. "I have poured a good half down his doublet. Hold his head steady, Will. There, good Master Lisle, how is it with you? 'Tis a fine cordial this, Will, and strong enough to bring a dead horse to life. There, thou seest, he is coming round. Shall I dose him again?"

"Gently, Jack, do not choke him. Thy cordial smells like strong waters."

"Good faith, lad, 'tis little else. Shouldst see our old Deborah smack her lips over it. 'A little drop, Master John,' she says, 'the leastest drop in the world, Master John, is a fine thing for a sinking heart.' So ho! Master Lisle, pull yourself together, man."

Now, the effect of the cordial was so praiseworthy that Philip Lisle began to

cough and then to struggle in my arms, and finally raised his hand to his head and uttered a most fervent groan, which, though dismal enough in itself, was to me the sweetest music I ever heard. For I had feared he was mortally hurt, and then what should I have said to Mistress Rose if ever we got out of that black abyss again ?

"How do you now, sir ?" said Jack.

"Oh!" said Philip Lisle. "My head rings like—is it you, Jack, and where are we, and where is Will Dale ?"

"Here I am, sir, holding you up," said I.

"And I am here, holding the cordial," said Jack. "Try another drop, sir—'tis, I assure you, the right sort."

"They have clapped us into gaol, I suppose," said Philip Lisle, having again drunk of the contents of Mistress Deborah's bottle. "Well, 'tis dark enow for aught."

"This is no gaol," said Jack, "but only his worship's cellar, and a damp hole it is.

We are like to have the ague an we lie here much longer, let alone the rheumatics. However, 'tis the fortune of war."

"Let me stand up," said Philip Lisle. "Alack, lads, my head feels sore where yonder snub-nosed rogue struck me with his quarter-staff. Well, how long are we like to remain here, I wonder?"

"Till master magistrate can do justice upon us, I should think," said Jack.

"Why, man, what breach of the peace have we committed? We are in the right; 'tis they who are in the wrong, rebels and traitors that they are!"

"Yea, surely," said Jack, "but they have might on their side, and might, they say, is right all the world over. However, what care I? When I elected to fight, I did not expect to fight with a branch of asphodel. Let us be as content as possible. If we had somewhat to sit upon, and a little food and drink, I could live till morning."

Now, it appeared as if our captors were going to leave us in that dark and uncomfortable lodging all night, for what seemed to be a long space of time went by before we heard aught of any of them. But at last, when we had despaired of any succour, the noise of a bolt and chain greeted our ears, and suddenly a door, somewhat above our heads, was opened, and a light streamed in upon us, revealing the figures of the choleric magistrate who had captured us, and of two or three of his men. This small group looked down upon us with something of triumph in their faces.

"So, my fine birds," quoth his worship, "so ye are caged at last, and are like to have your wings clipped. A pretty pass we are come to when such as ye incite honest citizens to war and bloodshed!"

"Sir," said Philip Lisle, "I am an officer holding His Majesty's commission, and——"

But at this he was interrupted by a burst of violent laughter.

"Yes, indeed?" said the old man. "Thou art a noted highwayman, robber, and thief, fellow. An officer, eh? Methinks the King would have done better to set apart some officer to see justice done upon thee at Tyburn. And you, Master Dale, a respectable yeoman, how can you associate yourself with folk like these? Fie on you, Master Dale!"

"Sir," I said, "I know not what you mean, but I am very sure that I shall punish those who have placed me here. Let us go at once about our liberty, sir. You have no right to detain us."

"Nay," quoth he, "if we have not right, we have power. We are for the Commonwealth in this town, lads, and will have no Star Chamber spies amongst us. Fie on you, Master Dale! And you, John Drumbleforth, fie on you! A parson's son, and thus

early led astray. But what can ye expect? These parsons are but wolves that rob the starved sheep, and their brood is no better."

"Sir," said Jack, "if you refer to my father, I make free to tell you that you are a liar. For my father is as good a shepherd as ever wore cassock and bands, though indeed he prayeth not at the street-corners, as I hear your worship is fond of doing."

Now, it would appear that the worthy man was somewhat used to air his religion, so that Jack touching him in a tender spot, he presently withdrew in a great passion, bidding his men bolt and chain us up again until our proud stomachs were cooled. Which they with alacrity did, so that we were once more left to the damp and darkness of the cellar.

This sad fate seemed peculiarly hard to Jack and to myself, who had never known what it was to have key turned upon us in our lives, and who were, moreover, not

accustomed to be treated in such summary fashion. The sound of the bolting and chaining of our prison-door grated very harshly upon our ears, and when the sound had died away and all was silent, we each gave vent to a dismal sigh.

"Nay, lads," said Philip Lisle, "you must not give way at a trifling matter like this. What! 'tis nothing to be shut up in a hole like this for an hour or two."

"With submission, sir," said Jack, "it seems to me a good deal, and your hour or two is like to be all night at least. Moreover, where are we going to find food and light? A comfortable night's lodging we are like to have, upon my word!"

"Courage, Jack," said I. "We shall manage to keep ourselves alive, I doubt not. I pray there be no rats in these cellars."

"Rats!" said Jack. "Ah! I see how it is. We are to be eaten alive. These

cellars, now—it seems to me, Will, that I remember something of them in our school-days."

"Why, of course, Jack. Do you not remember Samuel Penn, the stout lad, whose father kept the cooper's shop over against the Cross? We played many a game of hide-and-seek with Sam under that shop. Five or six doors away from this it is, and I warrant these are similar cellars. If so, we might wander in here a good while ere we came at an end."

Which was true enough, for the cellars under those ancient houses in the Market-place at Pontefract are so extensive in size that you might easily mistake them for natural caverns. They are all hewn out of the solid rock, and have so many twistings and turnings and odd nooks and corners, that one might hide there with safety from a foe. Some of them, again, are connected by secret passages with

various parts of the town, such as the Castle and the Priory of the White Friars, while others have secret staircases by which men could escape to the roof and leave no one the wiser. Designed for safety and protection they doubtless were in the ancient days, and being underground, they are still in the same condition as they were two hundred years ago.

Now, after we had remained some time in his worship's cellar, we began to grow very weary, and would fain have reposed ourselves if there had been aught to sit upon.

"What scurvy dogs are these," said Jack, "that will not give an honest enemy so much as a three-legged stool to sit upon! I never remember my legs aching so much before."

"I am going to sit on the floor, lads," said Philip, "and I advise you to follow my example. Take off your doublets and fold them into a cushion on which to sit. It

will at least keep the damp away from you somewhat."

"What!" said Jack. "So we are to sit upon our doublets all night, like a tailor on a table, without support for back or head. Fine work truly! However, we will lay it up against master magistrate, and charge him royally for it when paytime comes."

Now, it seemed to me that we should be much more comfortable if we all sat back to back, so that each would lean against the other. Which plan I proposed and carried out, so that in a few minutes we were all sitting in a triangle on the cellar floor, with our knees drawn up to our chins. And after that the night seemed to pass on slowly indeed.

It might be about midnight, though indeed it seemed to me and my companions much later, when I became conscious—for I had dozed somewhat — of a very low voice whispering to us through the darkness—

"Hist! hist! hist!"

"Who calls?" I said in a low voice.

"Is it thee, Will?" whispered a familiar voice.

"Yes, and here is Jack and Master Lisle," said I.

"'Tis I, Ben Tuckett," said the low voice. "Are you watched at all, Will?"

"Nay," I said, "there is naught to see us by here. Where are you, good Ben?"

"Hush!" said he. "I will show a light."

Presently there was a faint glimmer of light through a niche above the wall at our right-hand side. We rose from our cramped position and drew near to it.

"There is a door here," whispered Ben through the crack, "if only I can find the spring. Ye see, lads, his worship's shop is next to mine, so when I heard that he had thrown you into his cellar and meant to detain you there all night, I came down into my own cellar and began searching

about for this door, of which I had heard. Beshrew me! 'tis mighty hard to push back this same spring in the wall. Ah! there it is—but come forth quietly, gentlemen, for I would not have them know how you got out for all I am worth."

While he spoke he had found the spring and caused the stone to revolve, and we now passed out through a narrow slit in the wall and found ourselves in worthy Ben Tuckett's cellar, and at liberty once more.

CHAPTER XVI.

OF OUR FLIGHT FROM THAT NEIGHBOURHOOD.

NOW, when he had brought us into a place of safety, and had seen us lodged in somewhat more comfortable fashion than that we had lately enjoyed, our deliverer sat himself down before us, and looked at us with a severe countenance. "Gentlemen," said Ben, "you have truly brought misfortune upon yourselves, if not upon others. Did I not tell you that you would get sore heads if you strove to further the King's cause in this place? Was I not right? For sore heads you have, if I mistake not; and as for me, here I am

helping ye to sneak out of my neighbour's cellar as if we were all thieves."

"Peace, thou chattering knave!" said Jack. "Thieves, indeed! Why, Master Ben, what does this mean?"

"Like thieves, I said, Jack. Alas! you do not know what risks I am running, for the folk here are so bitter against Strafford and the Star Chamber that they would never buy of me again an it were known that I am a Royalist. For a Royalist I am, lads, if I am aught."

"Dear lad," said I, earnestly, "be whatever you please, Royalist or Roundhead, but at present, for the love of Heaven, give us something to eat and drink, for we are nigh famished. At least," I added, "I am, whatever my companions are."

"Famished am I," said Jack. "Hast got by any chance, Ben, a meat-pie? A meat-pie—with eggs, hah? And ale, Ben—a large can of ale."

"Why," said Ben, scratching his left ear as if the matter perplexed him, "I dare say I could find something of that sort, but, lads, how shall I hide your presence from my household? There are two 'prentices upstairs that might perhaps keep the thing secret, but the housekeeper—alack, she would noise it abroad in a moment, and then where should we all be?"

"Show me the way to the pantry," said Jack. "Let me fend for myself."

"Why," said Ben, still scratching his ear, "if you could put up without forks and plates, and could all drink out of one horn——"

"Good Ben," said Jack, "only produce the food and drink, and we will show thee what we can do without. Man, 'tis twelve hours since bite or sup passed these lips."

Thus adjured, Ben went softly away to visit his larder, and ere long returned bear-

ing a huge pasty of meat and a great jack full of ale, at sight of which Jack's eyes glistened exceedingly, as no doubt did my own also. And after that there was silence for a space, during which our jaws made up for what our tongues lacked. As for myself, I was as hungry as a hunter, and felt greatly relieved when I had eaten and drunk. Then, too, I felt my spirits revive, and longed to meet the mob once more by whose overpowering numbers we had been beaten down and forced into the magistrate's cellar.

"Ah!" said Jack, having swallowed the last mouthful of ale from the can, "I am myself once more. After all, there is naught like food and drink for setting a man up again. Master Lisle, how is it with you?"

"My head rings, Jack, my head rings yet. There is a lump the size of a hen's egg on the back of it. However, let us be

thankful. We have escaped, thanks to worthy Master Tuckett here."

"Gentlemen," said Ben, "I want no thanks. 'Twas well for you I knew the little secret. But now, lads, what are you going to do?"

"Do! Ride home at once," said I.

"Ride home? But they have placed your horses under lock and key."

Now, we had never thought of what might become of our horses, and when Ben gave us this news we looked at each other in amazement. Philip Lisle, indeed, jumped to his feet as if he would at once go forth to release his own animal.

"Perdition seize them!" said he. "I am naught without my horse, old as he is. He and I have had many a narrow shave, and have escaped all dangers. Where have they stowed our horses, Master Tuckett?"

"Nay," said Ben, "they are where you left them—at the Peck of Malt, but master

landlord has had orders to give them to nobody save a magistrate's man. Under lock and key they are at this moment."

"Oh!" said Philip Lisle, "an that be all, we shall not have much trouble in releasing them. If you, Will, can show me the ins and outs of the place, I will engage to have them under us in half an hour."

"And where will you go then?" asked Ben.

"To Dale's Field," said I.

"Better not at present," said he. "For I heard to-night that they have sent there to search for papers, and it might go ill with you to present yourselves there. They have some mighty grievance against you, Master Lisle, and indeed I heard certain persons swear that you should hang ere two days went by, which God forfend, for 'tis a poor death."

"Bah!" said Philip Lisle. "The rope is not spun, good Ben, that will hang me.

However, Will, what Ben says is good. Let us absent ourselves for a while from this part of the country and return later on. What say you; and you, Jack, what have you to say?"

"I am good for anything," said Jack. "It matters not to me whether we are here or there."

"But what shall we do about those at home?" I inquired. "How can we leave them? Who knows, indeed, what may have happened already?"

"Nay, man, let them search for what papers they will. They will find naught at Dale's Field, either of yours or mine. And I will not believe that Englishmen will cause trouble to innocent women. When they find naught they will go away and leave the house in peace."

"But they will not leave you in peace," said Ben, "for I heard that they were determined, being strong Parliamentarians,

to put a stop to your recruiting tactics, Master Lisle. So therefore I say—take yourselves to some safe place for a season."

"To the King's camp!" said Philip.

"Agreed," said Jack. "Come, Will, in for a penny, in for a pound. Let us with Master Lisle to the King and see what we can do there. You can return soon if you think it well."

Now, my blood was somewhat heated by the exciting adventure of the day, and I felt mightily inclined to fall in with Philip Lisle's counsel. I knew that Ben Tuckett would see to the safety of my mother and sister and of Rose Lisle, and as to the farm, my mother and Jacob Trusty would manage that. However I did not anticipate any trouble in our neighbourhood, for I felt sure that matters would soon settle themselves, seeing that we were not fond of war and liked trading and money-making mightily better.

"Well," said I, "then I will go with you, but I shall hold myself free to return homewards whenever I please. But now, gentlemen, there are our horses to consider. Are we to leave them where they are, and if so, how are we to get away on foot?"

But it was out of the question that we should leave the horses. Philip Lisle, indeed, would not have left Cæsar for all the gold of Peru, and as the other two beasts were mine—one of them my own mount and the other lent to Jack—I did not feel inclined to surrender them to people who had no right to their custody. So we immediately set to work making some plan whereby we could rescue the three animals from the stable where they were secured.

"I am not fond of fighting," said Ben Tuckett, "but I am a rare hand at a plot. Gentlemen, harken to me. Jack, you know the house that lies amongst the trees, 'twixt

here and Carleton, at the corner of the lane leading from Baghill?"

"Truly," said Jack; "old Master Hull lives there."

"That he doth not, because he is dead this three weeks, wherefore the house is shut up and desolate. Now, Jack, I will let thee out through my garden here at the back, and you must take Master Lisle across the fields beneath Friars' Wood and lie by that house until Will and I bring the horses to you, which I promise you we will not be long in doing. And now, friends, you shall have another mouthful of ale and then away."

Now, our task in getting easily away from Ben Tuckett's house was a light one, for those ancient houses in the market-place have long out-buildings and gardens in their rear, and at the foot of them is Southgate, and beyond that there lies a stretch of open country, dipping down into a valley and then

rising again until it reaches the village of Carleton a mile away. Across the garden and fields it would be easy enough to steal unobserved, and thereafter we should have no difficulty in riding away. To secure our cattle, however, was a difficult matter, for they were lodged at an inn which stood right in the heart of the town and were, therefore, hard to come at. Nevertheless we were determined not to leave them without a struggle.

Presently, then, Ben conducted Jack Drumbleforth and Philip Lisle out through his rear premises and set them across the fields to the house lately occupied by Master Hull. A fairly dark night it was by good chance, and therefore gave us all the better prospect of escape. It was past midnight when Ben came back from letting them out at the rear gate, and everything was quiet as the grave.

"Now, Will," said he, "we will go out by

the same way, for it will not do for me to unbar my front door at this time o' night. Let us pass round the town to Church Lane and there see how the land lies."

So we stole forth, climbing more than one garden wall in our desire to keep concealed from the sight of any who might be about at that hour, and presently we got round to the north side of the Market-place and went quietly up the narrow lane that leads by St. Giles' Church. In this lane were the stables which held our beasts, and as the lane itself was paved with rough boulders it was quite impossible to bring them out by that way.

Arrived in front of the stables we held a council of war. There was evidently no one on guard; they had contented themselves with locking the horses in a separate stable. Our work, then, was to find some means of picking the lock and afterwards

getting the animals out without awakening the people of the inn.

"This is the stable," said Ben, whispering with his lips close to my ear. "I sent one of my 'prentices round when I heard they had seized your horses, and bade him find out which they were confined in. This it is—the door next to the great water-butt."

"But how shall we pick the lock, Ben?"

"I have the necessary implements under my cloak."

"But once inside how can we bring out the horses without noise? Their feet will raise a clatter on these cobbles."

"I am not sure," said Ben, "but I have an idea that from this stable there is a door into a fold beyond. If it be so we can get away easily, Will. But if not—why, we must chance cobble-stones and everything and ride for it?"

While Ben spoke he had pulled out a great chisel, with which he forced out the staple to which the padlock was attached in the stable door, so that we entered very easily, and presently stood by the horses, who were quiet and peaceful, as though they knew themselves to be in prison.

"'Tis as I thought," said Ben, "there is a door that leads into the fold. From the fold there is a gate opening into the fields. There is another lock gone, anyway. And now, Will, let us get the beasts out. There is manure in this fold right up to the stable door, so none will hear if we walk a troop of horses across."

Now, my own two horses, knowing my voice and the touch of my hand, came readily enough with me, and I had them out of their stalls and in Ben's hand in the fold in a moment, but Cæsar, who was never harnessed by any other hand than his master's, was somewhat frightened, and

trembled as I strove to pacify him, so that I grew anxious lest he should make a stir and bring down the landlord and his men upon us. However, by dint of coaxing and free use of his name I got him out of the stable and led him myself across the fold, Ben following with the other two horses. And presently we were out in the open fields, where we both mounted, I leading Cæsar by his bridle, and Ben riding Jack's horse. Cæsar was plainly frightened and suspicious, for he knew that his master was not with him and would now and then stop and listen as he went along, so that our progress was interrupted continually. It was necessary, too, to make a long round in getting to the appointed meeting-place, for we had to skirt the town, passing round Tanshelf and the high ground over against the Priory, before we came to the lonely house where Jack and Philip waited for us. Then indeed there was much rejoic-

ing 'twixt Philip Lisle and his horse—nay, they could not have understood each other better if they had spoken a common tongue.

"And now, gentlemen," said Ben, "I will go back and leave you to your own devices. Will, if thou goest to the war, I will see to the women at Dale's Field. Make thy mind easy on that score. Jack, if thou seest fighting, remember thy old tricks. And so farewell, friends all, and God send ye good fortune and a safe return."

And therewith he gave us a clasp of the hand and vanished into the darkness, while we, clapping spurs to our animals, set out in the direction of Dale's Field, riding past Carleton and climbing the lower part of Went Hill, so that we might the sooner strike into the North Road.

Now, when we came to the old familiar homestead and could just make out its roofs and gables in the darkness, a great wave of

feeling came over me that I should do wrong to forsake it and those whom it sheltered. It was my duty after all to stay there and defend it and them. And so I turned my horse's head to the orchard gate and drew rein.

"Gentlemen," said I, "ride on and leave me here. I cannot go with you and leave all I have in these troublous times. It is best that you should go, but not that I should go with you. Go on therefore and let me stay."

"You are right, Will," said Philip Lisle, after a pause. "Yes, it is best that you should stay and that we should go. You shall hear of us soon. Take care of Rose, Will. And so, farewell."

I grasped his hand and promised, and then gave my hand to Jack, who squeezed it between his own.

"Good-bye, Will," said Jack. "I wish thou hadst gone with us, but 'tis best not,

considering the women. Well, perchance we shall get news of thee. Farewell."

And so they rode away, and I, standing at the orchard gate, heard the sound of their horses' feet dying into silence far off along the road.

END OF VOL. I.

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